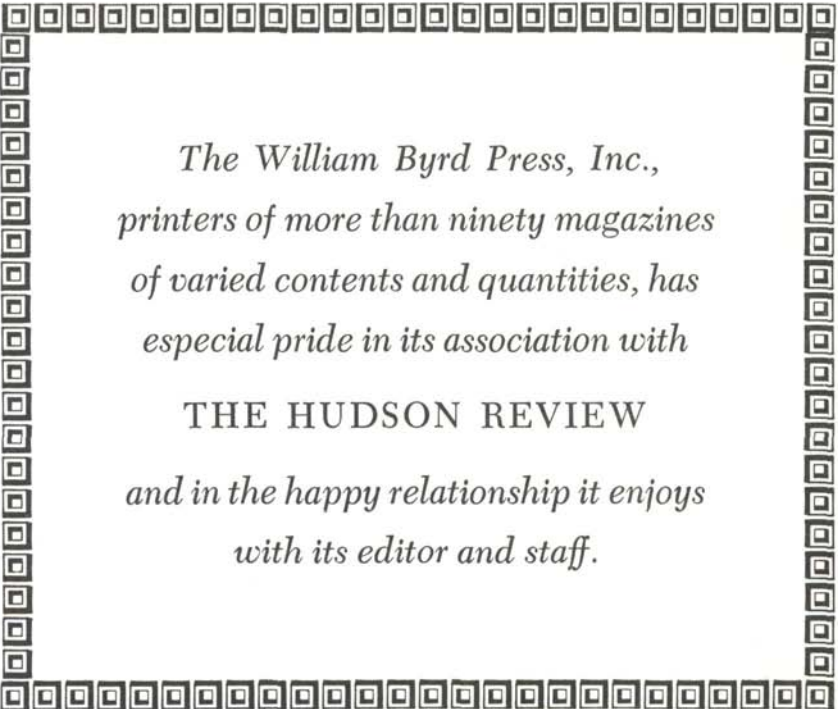


THE
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ROBERT M. ADAMS
J. R. AMMONS
ISAIAH BERLIN
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LAYDEN CARRUTH
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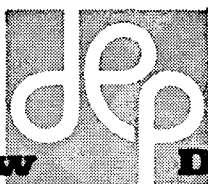
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VOLUME XXI

NUMBER 1

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Notes on Contributors

E. M. CIORAN, a Rumanian living in Paris and writing in French, is the noted author of *La Tentation d'Exister*, *La Chute dans le Temps* and other books (Gallimard). Several of his essays have been published in this Review. Frederick Brown, his translator, teaches French at Stony Brook and has written a biography of Jean Cocteau which will be published by Viking later this year.

Sir HERBERT READ is the eminent British poet, essayist and art critic.

Sir ISIAH BERLIN, author of *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, and *Karl Marx*, is President of the newly created Wolfson College of Oxford University.

Published in England several years ago under the pseudonym Joseph

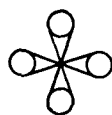
Kell, ANTHONY BURGESS' novel, *Inside Mr Enderby*, is scheduled to appear this Spring from W. W. Norton. Mr. Burgess is THE HUDSON REVIEW's regular London correspondent.

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER's latest novel, *The Manor*, was reviewed in the Winter, 1967-68 issue of this Review. A collection of Mr. Singer's short stories entitled *The Séance*, and including "Zeitzl and Rickel," will be published this Summer by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

HUGH MACDIARMID is Scotland's foremost living poet. His *Collected Poems* was published in a new edition by Macmillan last year.

JOSEPHINE MILES teaches at Berkeley. Her most recent book of poems, *Kinds of Affection*, was recently published by Wesleyan University Press.

(continued on page 8)



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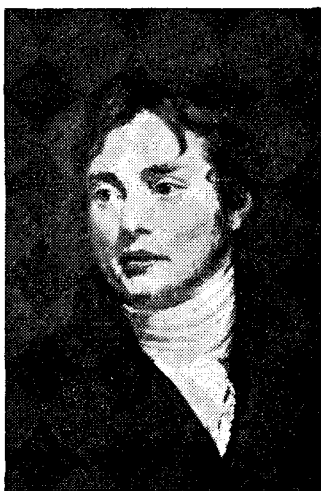
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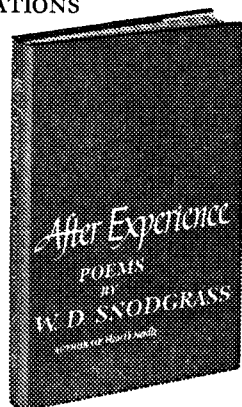
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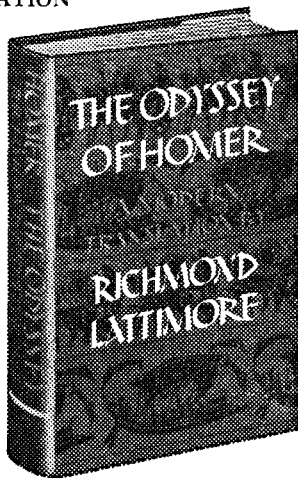
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1817

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Editorial

THE HUDSON REVIEW PUBLISHED ITS FIRST ISSUE twenty years ago, in the aftermath of World War II and Hiroshima, when a generation was first becoming aware of its literally infinite potential for ruin. This potential, along with its opposite, still remains. Industrial and technological progress has more and more forbiddingly taken the aspect of that "diseased commotion, moral and physical" which Poe believed could be purified only by cosmic fire. The greatest economic boom in history has only intensified the destruction of our countryside, the fouling of our environment, the alienation of our urban poor, the disaffection of our young. Now, in 1968, sickened additionally by an odious and unjust war, the nation is rapidly approaching a fateful self-confrontation. It will require all its honesty and intelligence if it is to survive, and help the world survive, the next quarter-century.

Of what use are literature and the arts at such a time? They will serve best if they perform their traditional function—which is, putting it only in part and much too simply, to keep our minds and sensibilities alert and honest, and our imaginations free. To help us remain open to possibility, and at the same time emotionally and intellectually responsible in the face of ideas and events. A society depends on its artists to give it its full scope of intellect and feeling. But whereas twenty years ago there was danger of good artists going unrecognized, the situation today is radically different. The universities and foundations have done their work all too well. A host of mediocrities (along with the few of real talent) is maintained on the near-permanent subsidy of fellowships and grants. At the same time, literature, in the wake of the visual arts, is being gradually absorbed by public relations. Commerce, which once rejected art, now hugs it in deadly embrace. With the connivance of the middlemen, artists are promoted as personalities; they are interviewed, gossiped about; they become celebrities. And from the standpoint of both promoters and public, it matters little, in fact is in many ways preferable, that their works not be understood. In this superflux, the problem is to pick out the genuine artist from the frauds and second-raters, the true talent from the inflated reputations, the valid insight from the spurious. This is the traditional mission of criticism, and it has never been more important than it is today.

Artists are necessary for the health of society, and criticism is necessary for the health of art. Today, there are at work, in unusually large number, forces that would pervert art and stifle responsible criticism. Under the circumstances it is all the more imperative for an independent literary review to exercise its lonely prerogatives: of remaining accessible to the new and unexpected, of joining no coterie (or even "establishment") of log-rollers and adulators, and of maintaining the cleansing function of criticism as the revealer and scourge of fraud.

—FREDERICK MORGAN

Notes on Contributors (cont.)

WILLIAM E. STAFFORD lives in Oregon and teaches English at Lewis and Clark College. His most recent collection of poems, *The Rescued Year*, was published in 1966 by Harper & Row. In recent months he has given readings at the Library of Congress and the Guggenheim Museum and at various colleges and universities in the U. S.

HAYDEN CARRUTH, a frequent contributor, is the author of six volumes of poetry, a novel, and a book of literary criticism. He lives in Johnson, Vermont.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE, Professor of Greek at Bryn Mawr, is the noted poet and translator. His version of the *Odyssey* was published by Harper & Row last Autumn.

W. S. MERWIN's newest volume of poetry, *The Lice*, was recently published by Atheneum. *Products of the Perfected Civilization*, a translation of selected writings of Chamfort, is forthcoming from Macmillan. The Sergei Essenin translations will appear in Olga Carlisle's *Poets on Streetcorners*, to be published by Random House next Fall.

JAMES MERRILL's last book, *Nights and Days*, won the National Book Award for poetry in 1967.

ANNE SEXTON's latest book, *Live or Die*, won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1967.

A. R. AMMONS has received the Traveling Fellowship of the American Academy of Arts and Letters for 1967-68. His most recent book is *Northfield Poems* (Cornell University).

B. H. HAGGIN's latest book is *The Toscanini Musicians Knew* (Horizon Press).

VERNON YOUNG, who has lived mostly in Stockholm in recent years, is at work on a book about Ingmar Bergman. His essay in this issue was occasioned by a recent visit to his native England.

JOHN SIMON is co-editor with Richard Schickel of *Film 67/68*, a collection of reviews and essays on the year's most interesting films, which will be published by Simon and Schuster this Spring.

LUCY R. LIPPARD has written on Pop Art, and is working on a book about Ad Reinhardt.

FRANÇOIS BONDY is a noted French critic and man of letters, and an editor of *Preuves*.

CHARLES THOMAS SAMUELS, a new contributor, is on temporary leave from Williams College, where he teaches in the Department of English. This year he is on an ACLS fellowship, completing a book entitled *The Ambiguity of Henry James*.

HERBERT GOLD lives in San Francisco. The most recent of his many novels is *Fathers* (Random House).

MARVIN MUDRICK, a regular contributor to this Review, is Provost of the College of Creative Studies and Professor of English, University of California at Santa Barbara.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL, author of *The Shakespearean Moment*, has been teaching in the Department of English at Kenyon College.

ANTHONY HECHT's collection of poems, *The Hard Hours*, was published last Fall by Atheneum.

ROBERT GARIS teaches at Wellesley College; he is the author of *The Dickens Theatre*.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS' latest book is *Nil: Episodes in the Literary Conquest of Void During the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University).

An Hour of Last Things, **GEORGE P. ELLIOTT's** new collection of short stories, will be brought out by Harper & Row this June.

*

HERBERT READ, JOSEPHINE MILES and **W. S. MERWIN** were contributors to our first issue, Vol. I, No. 1, Spring 1948.

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—C. P. SNOW in his Introduction

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The American Scene

Bonnie and Clyde

A BUNCH OF DECAYED CABBAGE LEAVES smeared with catsup, *Bonnie and Clyde* has been judged an artistic bouquet; not by middlebrow critics like Bosley Crowther but by reviewers whose very names stand for the setting and guiding of taste. Admittedly, the film is well-acted, slickly paced, and brilliantly edited. Yet after granting its technical polish, one is left with its meaning, which is heavily obvious when not confused; its tone and characterization, which are both implausible and inconsistent; and its violence, which is stomach-turning. One who measures its cynical falsity will realize how worrisome is its success.

To begin with, *Bonnie and Clyde* is presumed to be making serious comments about crime. So far as I can see, the comments are these: crime is joyless, it is sick, it is less concerned with money than fame. As an example of the first point, we have the scene at a motel in which Clyde's brother hoots and hollers, "Whooee, we'll have ourselves a time."—Long pause—"What we gonna do?"—followed by Clyde's account of how he avoided prison work by cutting off two toes, concluded with a broad smile and an "Ain't life grand!" To establish the bankrobber's sickness, we have at least four instances of Clyde's impotence that presumably explain his reliance on more lethal weapons. By way of asserting that the criminals seek publicity rather than gain, we have the Barrows stealing a newspaper from a rural mailbox before they count the proceeds from their latest bank. It is difficult to understand how insights so dramatized can be taken seriously; but Joseph Morgenstern, who on first viewing thought *Bonnie and Clyde* "a squalid shoot-'em-up for the moron trade," acknowledged great purposiveness and subtlety when *Newsweek* permitted him a public reversal the following week.

Viewers might well find themselves confused, for the film shuttles back and forth between radically different tones. Through most of the gang's activities, fast pacing and banjo music contrive to turn mayhem into zaniness and the bloody Barrows into charming hicks; but, in addition to being primitive, these scenes violate characterization and plausibility. Take, for example, Clyde's first bank robbery. As Bonnie drives him to the site of the crime, he seems as nervous as a raw recruit, yet we know that he has already served time for what he here contemplates with dread. (One might argue that this shows Clyde to be a frightened punk, but usually, as in the woods or the café before this job, he is made to seem authoritative, even sensitive.) When Bonnie finally shames him into action, he discovers that the bank is out of business. Considerately, the management has left a teller

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behind to inform him of the fact; but, of course, without the teller, there would be no comedy. Even more absurd is their second job, during which the get-away man, C. W. Moss, nearly ruins everything by backing into a parking place—guided less by his own stupidity than by the scriptwriters' desire for laughs. Eventually Moss pulls out, but his delay permits the bank's employees to chase him. Here the film turns suddenly gory, a fact that has occasioned its admirers' most sophisticated argument.

Pauline Kael asserts that the comedy purposefully turns into violence in order to implicate the viewer, who will be harrowed when he realizes that crime isn't, after all, fun: "the whole point of *Bonnie and Clyde* is to rub our noses in it, to make us pay our dues for laughing." What Miss Kael neglects to admit is that we laugh only because the director and writers have forced us—by wrenching their materials to fit a comic mold. Penelope Gilliatt recognizes that "the movie is full of scenes of giggling and show-off, but the mood belongs to the characters, not the film." One would be interested to see how she might go about arguing this distinction.

When sexually motivating the protagonists' crimes—that is to say, when introducing psychology to tone matters up—the film becomes not only implausible but dishonest. Scenarists David Newman and Robert Benton have recently confessed that Clyde was originally to have been homosexual rather than impotent, "but we [made the change] because homosexuality took over the whole movie and colored all responses." Translated less ingenuously, this comes out: whereas homosexuality repels the average spectator, impotence is likely to make him sympathetic. After all, Clyde is a hero.

Similarly motivated are the many hints that Bonnie and Clyde were heroes because America was undergoing a Depression. This note is first struck when Clyde invites a dispossessed farmer to shoot the sign placed before his house by the bank. Throughout the film, its director and set designer take great trouble duplicating the thirties in order to surround the Barrows with an ambience of social decay so palpable that mere presence might suggest causality. Thus we are disposed to believe Clyde when he promises Bonnie's mother that they will stop stealing as soon as times improve, and we can sympathize when the couple is forced to steal food because the bank they had previously attempted had already failed. But apart from the offensive facility with which it yokes public circumstance and private crime, occasionally the film argues against its own implication. Before they are killed, for example, when Bonnie asks Clyde what he would do with his life to live over, after an intense moment of concentration, he replies that he would pull his jobs in other states.

Bonnie and Clyde runs off in many directions at once (even Pauline Kael, who runs off in quite a few herself, calls it at one point, "the first film demonstration that the put-on can be used for the purposes

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By DANIEL HOFFMAN, *University of Pennsylvania*. In 1967 Mr. Hoffman received an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Accepting that award, he wrote: "Amid private sufferings and outrage at the brutalities of public life, it's gaiety that sustains us, and love, and the imagination's power to create from both deprivation and delight." These are the main themes in this, his fourth collection of poems. "The quality of his imagination is unique: there is in it an element of wry humor and light irony . . . it functions through language and metaphors of great clarity."— E. LUCAS MYERS, *Sewanee Review*

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Poems

By THOMAS KINSELLA, *American University*; DOUGLAS LIVINGSTONE; and ANNE SEXTON. This volume presents the work of three exciting young poets. Anne Sexton, an American, is the author of *All My Pretty Ones*, *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, and *Live or Die*. *Sjambok* was Douglas Livingstone's first substantial collection of poems. His subject is predominantly Africa and his style has an elegant ferocity perfectly suited to his violent themes. Thomas Kinsella is the author of *Another September*, *Downstream*, and *Poems and Translations*.

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The Modern Century

By NORTHROP FRYE, *University of Toronto*. In this book of major importance Professor Frye discusses "the outlines of the pictures that contemporary imagination has drawn of its world." He presents a brilliant array of ideas and observations on the mythology of our day and its central elements, alienation and progress; the effects of technology on the structure of our society; the characteristics we associate with "modern"; anti-social attitudes in modern culture; the role of the arts in forming the contemporary imagination; and finally the way in which the creative arts are absorbed into society through education.

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of art"). Yet though all of its admirers are aware that the film might be called wayward, they either de-emphasize or ignore its banal confusion. But since *Bonnie and Clyde* is so confused, its violence shows all the more lurid against the vague thematic background. The interesting questions to raise about the film therefore are why so many reputable critics condone violence lacking expressive purpose and why customers are willing to pay for a movie both repulsive in its bloodshed and disorienting in its tonal shifts. What holds the film together for these groups who themselves form so unexpected a combination?

We can approach an answer by way of the movie's most discussed episode. When Bonnie returns to her mother, the director shoots the scene in soft focus, emphasizing not only the dusty atmosphere in which it transpires but the haze of nostalgia and family feeling through which its participants perceive themselves. Bonnie's family is delighted to welcome the returning prodigals; they have kept a scrapbook of the gang's exploits. Bonnie romps with the children; Clyde, the good son-in-law, enjoys the vittles. We might be witnessing the family picnic of all our dreams—until Bonnie's mother tells her daughter and Clyde to keep on running from the cops. This ironic reversal, however, is too pat and unsurprising to dissipate the foregoing effect of lyricism, especially since the picnic is preceded by another scene of lyricism so fruity that we are now thoroughly confused. In the earlier scene, Clyde pursues Bonnie as she flees the gang to make her way home. Catching up with her in a golden wheat-field, he wails plaintively, "Please don't never leave me without sayin' nuttin.'" Accompanied by soulful music, the loving couple embraces, while the camera draws back, leaving them a poor tangled speck in a giant sea of grain over which portentous clouds glide, casting shadows. Under the circumstances, this might seem a sick joke: casting the crooks—previously clowns or desperadoes—in the roles of Mr. Newlywed and the young wife who wants to run home to mother. But like several other scenes, it creates unmistakable identification between the Barrows and the audience; and it is this identification which holds the spectator. Then, having persuaded the audience to identify with the Barrows, the film goes on to suggest that the crooks are superior to society. Here the serious critics seem to have found their delight.

It may seem tedious to recall the many ways in which the film slanders society, but I don't think one can understand its current popularity until this motif has been explored. Its presentation is relentless, beginning when the hungry but penniless Clyde attempts to steal groceries. While he inquires after peach pie, a piggish clerk flies down at him with a meat cleaver, thus nearly validating his subsequent chagrin: "He tried to kill me. I didn' wanna hurt him. You try to get somep'n to eat round here, they come at you with a meat cleaver."

Throughout the film, the forces of property and law respond with

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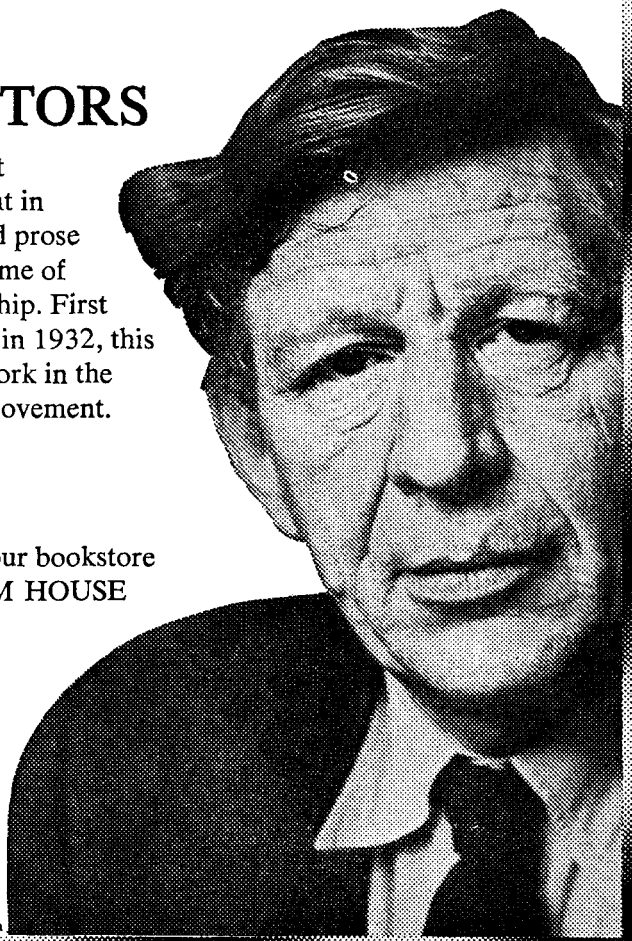


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excessive, even sadistic zeal. Not only do they require 1000 rounds of ammunition to finish the lovers off but when the gang tries to settle down in tidy domesticity, the cops intrude without even the chivalrous warning one has come to expect from earlier gangster movies ("All right, come out now; the house is surrounded!"). Ambushing the Barrows at a motel, the police unfairly arrive in an armored car at just the moment when Bonnie is showing Clyde how she has taken in an old dress; and when they kill Clyde's brother by surrounding him as he's down, the deputies shout like Comanche savages, in whose classic formation they have been staged. Yet though the besieged gang kills its share, the lawmen, unlike the criminals, never bleed.

If we turn our attention to the Barrows' only differentiated antagonists, the film's bias becomes unmistakable. The sheriff who finally kills the lovers sports a devilish mustache and, in the death scene, wears a black shirt, though everything about Bonnie and Clyde, including their car, is white. Critics have admired the film's insight into the crooks' pathetic desire for publicity. Sheriff Hamer is similarly motivated, but in his case the impulse is bad: he goes after Bonnie and Clyde out of vengeance, because they humiliated him by circulating the photo in which they forced him to pose as their captive.

Because the gang's antagonists are pigs and devils who wear black shirts and don't bleed, and because they have formed a society actually inferior to that of the criminals,¹ in which brotherhood and love predominate, we can sympathize with the Barrows, even though they are hard to keep in rational focus. But because the criminals are sick, dumb, and ludicrous, we can bear to watch them die. Citing this latter characteristic, Pauline Kael argues that *Bonnie and Clyde* is less sentimental than standard Hollywood gangster films because they used to make the criminals innocent. But in drama, if not in life, innocence is relative. The movie clearly authorizes Bonnie's doggerel characterization of herself and Clyde as scapegoats whom society will not leave in peace.

Thereby forced into partisanship, a spectator can actually approve the blood as the red badge of Bonnie and Clyde's undeserved suffering. Critics, of course, have found something deeper in it. More or less overt in every favorable review is the notion that *Bonnie and Clyde* makes a valid comment not so much on their lives as on ours. We know better than the thirties that violence may substitute for love,

¹ At no time is the film's comedy more heavily thematic than when the gang kidnaps the couple, Eugene and Velma. By turns, we are treated to exposures of the couple's prurience, cowardice, and secret regard for crime. Though blatant, all this has some relevance. Why though, do we get the revelation that Velma has lied to Eugene about her age? For the same reason that the respectable Mr. Moss, who will betray Bonnie and Clyde, shouts at his son, "I'm glad that your ma ain't alive to see this thing," meaning not C.W.'s crime but his tattoo. And for the same reason that the one member of the gang who is disloyal, dishonest, and greedy is Blanche—the preacher's daughter.



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that it is often perpetrated by moral morons, that America today incites violence by its disrespect for law and people. "All this should strike the viewer with icy familiarity," asserts Robert Hatch (an editor of *The Nation*) "in our day of motorcycle gangs and flower children, Nazi insignia, cheap beads, incense, drugs, apathy and motiveless violence." Whereas the audience probably identifies with Bonnie and Clyde as surrogate social victims, serious reviewers identify them as surrogate social problems. No wonder, despite the bloodshed, that everyone is happy.

But the movie's inventors give a less edifying account of their product's appeal: violence in the arts, they say, is "fun," "and if that idea causes you to blanch or cluck the tongue reprovingly . . . then you are not only soft . . . you are something worse: out of step." As Pauline Kael reports with equanimity, "in the spoofs of the last few years, everything is gross, ridiculous, insane; to make sense would be to risk being square."

Ironically, whereas Newman and Benton (creators of *Esquire's* "What's In and What's Out" and Dubious Achievement Awards) think violence fun and significance a drag, reviewers and moviegoers have, through their earnest pursuit of the movie's purpose, turned *Bonnie and Clyde* into the year's most successful and—the ads bray—"most talked-about film." This irony is the true key to the film's meaning, for as *Newsweek* reports, Newman and Benton "always seem to know what's going to pop up next in American culture."

Lurid example of a vulgar, wornout genre, *Bonnie and Clyde* nevertheless seems up-to-date. Not because of its technique, out of Godard and the vaudeville blackout; not because of its ideas, out of *Sanctuary* (the impotent gunman) or Erik Erikson (the identity crisis), but because of an attitude which persuades the viewer to swallow its violence: the attitude—it is precisely nothing more—that society and normality are frauds. Since this is close to having become a contemporary article of faith, it is no wonder that violence has become as entertaining in art as it seems to have become excusable in politics. Oppose the latter, and you are a soft-hearted liberal; oppose the former, and you are "something worse: out of step."

That Bosley Crowther is "out of step" should come as no surprise. When for once, however, he marched slowly in a good cause, he brought down upon his head anger so fierce that we can now see how precious a possession the film's attitude has become. Thus Penelope Gilliat, obviously thinking of Crowther, said that one would need "a head full of wooden shavings" to think that the movie glamorized crime, though if the word "glamorize" is correctly understood it is entirely to the point. Thus Pauline Kael, obviously thinking of Crowther, begins her piece in a manner uniquely wistful: "How do you make a good movie in this country without being jumped on?" (Miss Kael, it should be explained, thinks "*Bonnie and Clyde* . . . the most excitingly



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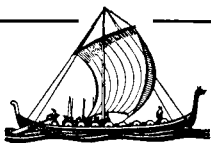
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American American movie since *The Manchurian Candidate*!") Thus Andrew Sarris felt called upon to begin his review in *The Village Voice* by informing readers that "*Bonnie and Clyde* has become the subject of a Crowther crusade that makes the 100-Years-War look like a border incident" (a remark whose inaptness would inspire hyperbole had Sarris not already pre-empted the heights). In fact, so enraged is Sarris that he charges poor Crowther with a crime of which Crowther was manifestly innocent: calling for censorship, "at a time when too many bigots see a golden opportunity to lash the Negro with fake rhetoric of law and order."

Sarris' absurd political analogy suggests the covertly political basis of most of the film's support, a phenomenon even more strikingly displayed by the irate letter-writers who bombarded the *Times* after Crowther's review appeared. But at the same time that the film's attitude suggests affinities with some current political notions, its supporters don't want it taken too seriously. One almost hears them tremble: if the establishment really sees what is going on in *Bonnie and Clyde* they may spoil the fun by taking it away from us! Thus, after coming to realize that its use of violence was relevant, Joseph Morgenstern spins about to assert that "when we talk about movies, even artistic movies, we are not talking about urban-renewal programs, nuclear non-proliferation treaties or rat-control bills." Yet Morgenstern then goes on to argue that the film's violence takes its significance from the fact that "most of humanity teeters on the edge of violence every day."

Does *Bonnie and Clyde* have political or social significance far beyond its significance as a work of art? To answer "yes" is not to contend that the film incites acts directly, for against such a contention Morgenstern would be right and Sarris would have reason to fear thought control. But art initiates action in more subtle ways: by reflecting contemporary attitudes and thus, through the power of reflection, confirming them. How much more potent is this process when performed by a piece of mass entertainment.

It would be foolish to equate the growing approval of violence, even among humane and liberal persons, with the specific advocacy of a bloodthirsty, cheap film. Those who riot against conditions in the Negro ghetto or the war in Vietnam can claim precisely the moral validation for their acts which the Barrow Gang so conspicuously lacks. But each form of behavior embodies a similar lapse of commitment to organized society, and in accepting one we may find ourselves accepting the other. Each expresses the underlying belief that society represents not law and order but only convention and force. When society is no longer felt to represent legitimacy, protest itself becomes the only legitimate response. But with standards of legitimacy confounded, the criminal may seem to resemble the rebel, the hippie to merge with the reformer. Surely *Bonnie and Clyde* did not produce



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society's current disrepute or our desperate reaching out for any alternative. Just as surely, by playing with the disrepute it exploits the desperation, helping us to celebrate what we once condemned.

If seeing the film as a reflection of larger social issues seems far-fetched, I commend the reader's attention to an important study of the German expressionist film after World War I: Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* (Princeton, 1947; reissued, 1966). Assuming that movies are an index to national mentality because they are collectively produced and massively consumed. Kracauer traces through the period's chief films the rise of Nazism. In short, he implies that popular entertainment acts as a national fever chart. In the thirties in Germany, the disease was authoritarianism; in the sixties in America, it is anarchy. Through the stream of anarchic art which flows high and low in our culture today, *Bonnie and Clyde* thrashes prominently, its protagonists folk heroes in a national epic struggle.

The day after I saw the film, at the school where I teach—a very good school with intelligent students from comfortable homes—I saw scrawled on a bathroom wall, "C. W. in '68." If this example of collegiate graffiti is portentous to even a small degree, then investigating the importance of *Bonnie and Clyde* can't be left to reviewers.

—CHARLES THOMAS SAMUELS

Vastations of Will

KENNETH BURKE READ SANTAYANA, he says somewhere, while lounging in white flannels along the Mediterranean. This seems more fitting than to read William James's letters in Saratoga, as I did, while dragging through a summer of black misery, smelling the mattress in which I sleepless lay. After tracking through his lifetime, even an expurgated epistolary lifetime, I was nearly ready to resume my own existence once more—to face the world and Santayana. I swallowed James like a spansule of wit, energy, hope, and humorous self-pity. He brought communion in a time of selfish disease. Like Tolstoy, he turns and turns, always saying: *Still alive*. Studying him is much preferable to suicide. After reading James (William), one may speak of suicide, but it would be foolish to do it. He covers the ground so thoroughly and takes all the surprises out of it.

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innocent he is sometimes innocently portrayed to be. Miracle of miracles, he knows who he is, unlike many Americans, and yet is lonely. He reversed the usual swagger of the confident, unselfconscious, conscienceless American of those mythic times at the junction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The sharp optimist still exists all across this paradoxical America, not knowing who he is, not lonely. What Swedenborg and Henry James Sr. called "Vastations"—oceanic tides of doubt, anxiety, and despair—were for James the beginning of the hope of truth. He experienced these sweeping invasions of the spirit which destroy some men, and redeem those who hope to be more than beasts on earth in the society of beasts.

I read his letters and then went back to writing and to life. For the first time in months I left the grounds of Yaddo, a reservation and retreat for artists, and walked down the country road that led into the town of Saratoga. I had keys, money, jingles in my pocket. I tottered like an invalid, which in fact I was. When I hit the city, that bedraggled resort, I nearly fainted with shock. Everyone in the street was ancient. There were wheelchairs, crutches, peculiar prosthetic supports; there was slobbering and toothlessness; there was a mob of centenarians. One paralytic was being wheeled by a hairy old lady in a print smock. The street was awash in senility. Nobody under ninety, it seemed—and for a moment, no glass in which to see my own face.

I wanted to ask the way to a hospital. I've gone mad at last, I thought, I too must be ninety years old. And yet I felt so cool and slow and knowing in my delusion that all the dying of the world had forgotten to die.

Then I saw the banner above the street: WELCOME VETERANS OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR.

I tottered with laughter. I had been ready to believe my spirit and soul, not my eyes. James had been teaching me to listen to the world, but I was stubborn in my deafness. There was the fishy stare of the conventioners at each other. *Hey there, you still alive? Let's go drink some broth.* I suffered a vastation of laughter which cleansed and purified me, and I explored the street, looking at something other than myself, and declared myself cured.

2

Professor Gay Wilson Allen has written a biography of William James¹ which has defects of stiffness but the great virtue of letting James speak for himself. Out of the biography can be drawn some essential threads of the life. James's grandfather was a self-made millionaire. The spiritualized father, Henry Sr., "never guilty of a stroke of business," became the great American exponent of Swedenborg, crowding the book counters of Boston with tomes filled with gas, hopes, and mild and sweet good sense. For his children he sought free-

¹ WILLIAM JAMES, by Gay Wilson Allen. Viking. \$10.00.



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dom, spontaneity, and love. He also sought to preserve their innocence, which doesn't seem consistent. For the daughter Alice there were irreconcilable tensions; she became an intelligent, neurotic invalid. But for both Henry and William, their father's program set in motion divergent philosophies of astonishing vigor. They were kept as indulged and adventurous pet children until late in their lives. As François Mauriac says, the poet is a child in a man's body.

In his youth, like many older brothers, William was a witty bully who teased his weaker younger brother unmercifully. He was a charming monster, and of course Henry inevitably came to desire his approval above that of anyone else. While Henry dreamt his stories and his fantasies of glory, William sketched and painted, but reluctantly let New England convince him that this was not a serious occupation for a man. Instead he went to medical school. In those times, not so long ago but nevertheless before the germ theory became popular, surgeons wore bloody gowns as a matter of pride; patients died of "miasma"; James came to believe in patience, comfort, tender solicitude as a cure to illness, and bitterly noted the traditional emphasis in the profession on the doctor's profit. Surely the notions of the "will to believe" and "mind cure" were partly a reaction to the disorder of the science and practice of medicine.

In a very modern way, James approached psychology through physiology. He was interested in creativity, drugs, "peak experiences," and in this he anticipated contemporary ideas. He liked to walk off "tedium and trouble," of which his life had aplenty. "I require to be somewhere in reach of conversation, music, French and English newspapers," he wrote, "or at least the sight of rushing affairs that a large city gives, to keep of sound mind." In a time when people are ashamed to claim pride in urban tastes, this city-dweller has no shame. When Henry's novelistic mind seemed to be stuffed with airy fancy, William advised him to see more of the real world and become a better man, a better novelist. Henry said that philosophical discussion made his head ache. William said, in effect: Let it ache. Henry often brought his body into the picture, despite its unwieldy construction and uses. He left Italy early, he confessed, because of all that starch—constipation. (Did the Roman legions conquer Europe in search of easy bowels?) William tried to cure him by cheerfulness, but later counselled fresh vegetables—both a doctor and a brother. Good cheer plus fresh vegetables may have been the proper remedies for the constipation of the distinguished author of *The Spoils of Poynton*, but of course they were never given their chance.

While Henry griped, William was trying to help him at long distance and suffering his own nervous collapse. In 1870 he wrote that he was "melancholy as a whippoorwill." Like most diarists, he kept a better record of his miseries than of his joys. He stamps and notarizes his depressions, and the wanderings with which he thought

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to outwit them, but his ecstasies remain discreetly unchronicled until, by implication, they are betrayed in triumphant labors.

It is well-known that William James was a great critic not only of his brother's peristaltic processes, but also of his novels. In a letter of that year, 1870, he reported that the style of Henry's "Trans-Atlantic Sketches" ran a little to "curliness." He said, charming and graceful bully that he was: "In my opinion what you should cultivate is directness of style. Delicacy, subtlety, and ingenuity will take care of themselves." He also nagged him about the constant use of French phrases, which seems, since William also used them, plus occasional German, a little *de trop*.

The practical mind operated in the airiest spheres of James's conduct. He becomes a teacher of anatomy and physiology at Harvard because he disliked treating philosophy as a "business." Concern with the meaning of life could not be a profession; it was too important for that. This special man, painter, wit, psychologist, melancholic, wanted to earn his living like other men, though probably your average common man does not earn his living as a professor at Harvard.

"The gallant mood" is how James described his metaphysical yearning for meaning. When we feel well and whole, we seek to find the meaning of life and think we can. When we feel ill and sad, like a onetime bugler from the Spanish-American War, we think we will die in Saratoga without climbing San Juan Hill or the principle of rationality. Perhaps some never yearn for the truth in this way after their revolts of adolescence; I seem to have met some such, but their reality is elusive, perhaps even to themselves. It might be a good way to live, once-born like that, but most of us, heartsick or heartwell, are condemned to be twice-born, remembering the unrememberable. We talk about "soul," "truth," and "meaning," and know that the words aim to be non-words, and yet we laugh about the knowledge of which song rhythms and the rhythms of love momentarily persuade us. We say Truth, but we understand only that we feel something vivid and powerful. We capitalize the words for irony; we put quotation marks around them to evade responsibility. "A philosopher," said James, "has publicly renounced the privilege of trusting blindly, which every simple man owns as a right." And so we also have vivid doubts.

Probably not even policemen are really simple any more. But James thought himself too simple to be a philosopher, and therefore, out of humility, he set himself the task of mastering psychology, anatomy, physiology, medicine, literature. He thought he might be useful, even employable. Then perhaps he could allow himself some gallant moods.

The world James lived in was the world he came to value, despite all illness and longing, joy and fret. And of this world he would build his hopes and understanding, trusting men in the process of making



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themselves, trusting the things they built a little less. A true American and optimist, he believed in virtuous and creative work. A part of the dark side of his nature, but of course only a part of it, can be named specifically here: he gave his love to activities, not to things accomplished. His own books never entirely pleased him. He would always do better next time. In the meantime, it was good enough to do what he was doing, but not quite good enough. One of the things James did at Harvard was to establish the first laboratory for psychological experimentation by students. Noisy Theodore Roosevelt worked in this lab. Once James played with amyl nitrite, a drug which is now part of the arsenal with which the hippies meet the world. They call it "poppers," and use it to rush blood to the head. James reeled, cried out, "Oh, how queer I feel!" and, satisfied, let it go at that.

3

If William James had ever been eclipsed, now would be a good time for his revival. He is close to the nerve of contemporary dilemmas: Should we act about the abuses of power, or wait for more documentation, and then still more, and talk and argue and wait? Or shouldn't we take chances and maybe be wrong? Should we consult our consciences and our souls and make martyrs of ourselves if necessary?

Civil rights and Viet Nam activists would find a friend in this non-academic academic. He sought not so much an explanation of things—he despaired of anything so pure as that—as a principle of coherence. He had no Platonic or Spinozan formula, ideas or forms or rationality, no pantheism to console him; he believed in his own failing energy, his sickly powers, his unreliable enthusiasm. The activity of thought and the faculties of observation and the surprises of vivid consciousness would have to suffice. He paid attention. Certain knowledge was a constant nostalgia, a kind of homesickness in him. Activity was his consolation, though he was never sure it would get him all the way home. If the poet is a child in a man's body, then this philosopher was also a poet, a poignantly foolhardy child. Pessimism lay multiplying within his hopefulness like tuberculosis bacillae. His father, Henry Senior, believed that God's creation of the world was continuous and active, not a magic bang out of a void. William wished he could believe. But in answer to the question, If God created the world in six days, what has he been doing since? William quoted a child: "Sitting for His portrait."

Thought and feeling were intertwined in a way which would be merely irresponsible if there were not as much genius in his feeling as in his thought. Knowledge for him was mere knowledge unless his senses and his emotions knew all together. This means, of course, that he changed his mind about things. "Do I contradict myself?" Walt Whitman asked during that same century of American will and optimism. "Very well, then I contradict myself."



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In one of his recurrent episodes of distress, William James, the great philosopher, even visited a mind-cure lady named Lydia E. Pinkham. He would try anything reasonable; he would also try anything unreasonable. Lydia Pinkham's vegetable compound, decorated with a hormonal portrait of the lady, was long used to ease menstrual cramp, and still is. It contains alcohol, a famous remedy; taken by the spoonful, it is called medicine. James saw the emotions as bodily, the body as emotion. He was interested in the interrelationships of drugs and psychology, the effects of labor and boredom on body and soul. Here too he was very modern.

Another of his descriptions of Henry James is acute, novelistic, rather harsh, rather tender, and gives a good sample of his practical mind at work. He was writing to his wife after they had not seen Henry for six years:

Harry is as nice and simple and amiable as he can be. He has covered himself, like some marine crustacean, with all sorts of material growths, rich seaweeds and rigid barnacles and things, and lives hidden in the midst of his strange heavy alien manners and customs; but these are all but "protective resemblances" under which the same dear old, good, innocent, and at bottom very powerless-feeling Harry remains, caring for little but his writing, and full of dutifulness and affection for all gentle things. . . .

The last phrase doesn't really follow. William seems to have been dutiful, too. Henry often touchingly described how he was just about to begin reading his brother's first masterpiece, *The Principles of Psychology*—he would recline on roses and sip it like sherbet—but somehow he never found the time or the roses. If Henry was negligent, others were not. William wrote to a friend: "An enthusiastic clergyman wrote me yesterday that I am of the company of Isaiah and St. Paul. I have just replied: 'Why drag in St. Paul and Isaiah?' "

Ironical he was, boyishly vain and buffoonish sometimes, but he knew that his Pragmatism would be the definitive American philosophy of an epoch. His continual testing and probing of experience, his serene dogmatism in the persistence of doubt, his cheerful pessimism about the possibility of "knowing," his shrewd understanding of psychology and the need to *feel* as if he knew—it was the most humane philosophy possible for the emerging mass society. His irony kept fanaticism and irrationality at bay. He kept sight of the individual, the person. He was amused by romantic excess, but took a practical American distance from it. He managed to keep doubt and certainty in order—this is his esthetic and moral appeal as a man—although he does not satisfy the demands of rigor. He well understood that all philosophy is autobiography, like all novels, like all books of any sort, even and perhaps especially the bank book. His distinction between the

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"tender-minded" (rational, idealistic, platonic) and the "tough-minded" (empirical, skeptical, scientific) is morally possible only because James himself knew that he was both tender and tough. If he had taken sides, it would have been another brutal dogmatism. Another of his famous epithets, the distinction between the "once-born" and the "twice-born," which he took from an Eastern tale, is also to be understood as a modest metaphor. The "once-born" live in the here and now only; they came onto earth without memories, and they disappear, leaving husks in which no soul can be found but from whence no soul has fled. The twice-born bear vague memories of another life as a stone, or a toad, or an angel (peace to Jung), and their lives betray this thickness and depth; their souls have perspectives in the past and the future. But judging by his approach to others, it seems that James never knew a once-born soul. He credited all men with depths which he sought to help them discover.

4

For James, philosophy was not a Doric bank; it was an inn, and a crowded one. He was willing to lose purity in the search for purity. He was an American without hypocrisy.

Often the tenderly romantic soul gives itself up to abandon and cruelty, like the poetic Germans. By reaction to the loneliness and idiocy of solipsism, men surrender to mass rule. Cynicism is the common result of idealism, and not simply by the rule of after the fact, therefore caused by the fact. The doctrinaire lover loves most of all his histrionic vision of himself. Disappointment at a lack of appreciation by their audience changes these preening lovers into excellent enraged destroyers, delighted by gore. Which is all to say that uninformed virtue is an unreliable commodity when men spend most of their lives at answering the question, *Who am I?* Trust more the man who keeps in touch with his achieved weakness.

James was a superlatively healthy philosopher, perhaps partly because he was a sickly young man with a history of complaint. Boils, eyestrain, backache, headache, rebellious kidneys and stomach, obscure nervousnesses and anxieties all contributed to his health. It takes great will to do creative work, and much of the will must be used to relax the will. James had to dig out of Harvard before he could return. When he ceased fretting and found his way, his health improved.

William James is the great tough guy of American letters—sound, vigorous, intelligent, "pragmatic." And also melancholic, a frustrated painter, obscurely boiling with possibilities unfilled by a lifetime of friendship, achievement, and handsome loafing through the world. Just as his brother Henry, weak and sick, marched like a trouper through the possibilities of the novel, so William, strong and dominant, fainted expiringly through a long and successful career. Henry was no Mallarmé, William was no Teddy Roosevelt.

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It's now better than ten years since I first read William James's letters in the library at Yaddo, and felt like Rip Van Winkle at Saratoga among the mineral springs and the Spanish-American War veterans, and wrote a story to the rhythm of Louis Armstrong singing "Loveless Love," which was his version of "Careless Love."

With dreamless dreams
And schemeless schemes
We wreck our loveboats on the shore

I also danced with a girl who danced herself to exhaustion every night because she had discovered that her husband was a homosexual. "That's all right, that's all right," I told her, though I wasn't sure it was.

When the summer was over, I could set about listening to the noise of life again because there was nothing sensible to be made of the paltry rattle in my throat. I wasn't dying. An energy out of William James, almost physical, surely very physical, had charged me with some of his mission.

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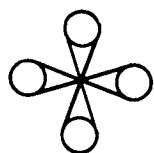
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eant of irreducible ideas and beliefs would do well to fix his
attention on the first centuries of the Christian era. There he will
find the very model of every kind of conflict encountered, on a
reduced scale, at any given moment in history. There is good rea-
son for this: never before or since have men hated more. All due
credit goes to the Christian—feverish, uncompromising, expert
from the outset in the art of detesting, whereas pagans were left
with only one weapon they knew how to wield: scorn. Aggressive-
ness is a trait the new men and new gods have in common.

If a freakishly well-mannered person, never visited by fits of
peevishness, wanted to learn how to be peevish, or at least find
out what purpose it serves, the simplest thing for him to do would
be to read several ecclesiastical writers, beginning with the most
brilliant of the lot, Tertullian, and ending with, let's say, the
venomous but insipid Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, whose tirade
against Julian the Apostate makes you want to convert to pagan-
ism on the spot. Not a single virtue is vouchsafed the Emperor:
with undisguised satisfaction the author discounts his heroic death
in the war against the Persians, claiming he was killed by "a bar-
barian, a jester by profession, who traipsed after the army to help
soldiers forget the trials of war with his banter and sallies." No
elegance, no effort to appear worthy of such an adversary. What
makes his attitude the more unpardonable is that he had known
Julian in Athens when as young men they attended the philo-
sophical schools.

There is nothing so loathsome as the tone assumed by defenders
of a cause which, though seemingly foiled, has really gained the
ascendancy; they gloat just thinking of their triumph, yet at the
same time cannot help but turn their very fears into threats.
When Tertullian, sardonic and quaking, describes the Last Judg-
ment, which he calls "the grandest spectacle of all," he imagines

the last laugh he will have contemplating a heap of monarchs and gods "uttering horrible moans from the very bottom of the pit." This compulsion to keep reminding pagans that they were doomed, they together with their idols, was enough to exasperate even the most equable minds. Christian apologetics, which is a running libel camouflaged as treatises, represents the *Summum* of bilious literature. It is only in the shade of worn-out divinities that one can take a free breath.

The more persuaded of this one becomes, the more harping and terrifying the suspicion that if one had lived during the up and coming years of Christianity one might have fallen under its spell. The beginnings of a religion (like the beginnings of anything) are always suspect, yet only they possess some reality, they alone are *true*, true and abominable. The investiture of a new god, whatever its identity and birthplace, cannot be witnessed with impunity. This is not a recent inconvenience. It prevailed as early as Prometheus, victim of Zeus and the new power clique on Olympus.

Far more than the prospect of salvation, wrath against the ancient world swept Christians into a common delirium of destruction. Since most of them came from foreign parts, it isn't surprising they should have vented themselves against Rome. But what sort of frenzy could the native enroll in once he had converted? Less well-equipped than the others, he had but one recourse: to hate himself. If not for this deviation of hatred, a rare case at first, but highly contagious, Christianity might have remained a mere sect limited to foreigners, the only clientele capable in fact of painlessly exchanging the ancient gods for a nailed cadaver. Let anyone who wants to know how he would have taken Constantine's about-face, put himself in the shoes of a citizen holding to his heritage, of a pagan proud to be one: how could he give his consent to the cross or bear to see the symbol of a dishonoring death emblazoned on Roman standards? Yet people did resign themselves to it, in droves, and the sum total of inner defeats underlying this resignation staggers the imagination. If, as an ethical phenomenon, it may be understood as the crowning event of a crisis and thus granted the status or the pretext of a conversion, viewed from an exclusively political angle it resembles treason. To abandon the gods who made Rome was to abandon Rome it-

self for an alliance with this "new race of men born yesterday, without fatherland or tradition, leagued against all civil and religious institutions, wanted by the law, universally notorious, but wearing the general execration like a badge of honor." Celsus' diatribe dates from 178. Nearly two centuries later, Julian in turn would write: "If, during the reign of Claudius and Tiberius, a single distinguished mind was converted to Christian ideas, consider me an unmitigated faker."

The "new race of men" would frantically run around in circles before finally conquering the more fastidious element. How could these low-born strangers whose every gesture invited scorn be trusted? There was the rub, for by what manner of means could one accept the god of those one scorned, a god who was, to boot, of recent manufacture? Only the antiquity of gods guaranteed their legitimacy and any god was tolerated provided he had not been freshly minted. Under the circumstances people found the Son the more noisome on account of his absolute novelty: a mere contemporary, a parvenu. Repellent character that he was, unforeseen and un-prefigured by any *sage*, he came as an appalling surprise. His advent created a scandal of such proportions it took four centuries to abate. The Father, on the other hand, being *acknowledged* as an old acquaintance, Christians fell back on him for tactical reasons, claiming him for their own: weren't the books that celebrated him, books whose spirit the Gospels perpetuated, several centuries older than the temples, the oracles, the pagan gods? Or so Tertullian would have us believe. This apologist, once he really warms up, goes so far as to maintain that Moses pre-dates by a few millennia the destruction of Troy. Ramblings such as this were calculated to offset remarks like the following: "After all," wrote Celsus, "Jews have, over the course of long centuries, fashioned themselves into a national body, they have created laws conforming to their ways which they maintain even today. The religion they observe, whatever its worth and whatever one may think of it, is the religion of their ancestors. In abiding by it faithfully, they have acted no differently from other men who uphold the customs of their country."

To yield to the prejudice of oldness was to recognize, implicitly, the exclusive legitimacy of the indigenous gods. Christians were, by design, quite willing to bow, nominally, before this prejudice,

yet they could not go all the way, for adopting it together with all its consequences would have been suicide. As Origen saw it, the ethnic gods were idols, remnants of polytheism; before him Saint Paul had demoted them to the rank of demons. Judaism considered the lot of them false, excepting one—its own. “Their only error,” wrote Julian about the Jews, “is that while striving to gratify their own god, they do not at the same time serve the others.” He does, however, praise them for abhorring the fashion in matters of religion. “I flee innovation in every domain, and especially where the gods are concerned,” is an avowal that discredited him, people availing themselves of it to censure him as a “reactionary.” But what “progress,” one may ask, does Christianity represent in relation to paganism? There is no “qualitative leap” from one god to another, or from one civilization to another, no more than from one language to another language. Who would dare proclaim Christian writers superior to pagan ones? A Saint Jerome confesses that, after re-immersing himself in Cicero or Plautus, he feels some aversion even for the Prophets, whose writing has more life and style than the Church Fathers’. “Progress” during that era was embodied by these unreadable Fathers: did turning away from them mean turning “reactionary”? Julian was perfectly right in preferring Homer, Thucydides or Plato. The decree by which he forbade Christian teachers from explicating the Greek authors opened him to lively criticism not only from his adversaries but even from his admirers throughout the ages, all of them. Without trying to justify him, one cannot help but understand him. He was contending with fanatics; to win their respect he was obliged, now and then, to be as exorbitant as they, to box their ears with some insane edict, otherwise they would have looked down on him as an amateur. Thus he asked these “tutors” to emulate the writers they were commenting and share their opinions on the gods: “If they believe that these authors were mistaken on the most important point, why don’t they betake themselves to the churches of the Galileans and comment on Matthew and Luke!”

From the ancients’ viewpoint, the more gods one recognized, the better one served the Divinity of which they were but aspects, faces. Limiting their number would have been an impiety, and suppressing them in favor of one a crime. This is the crime Chris-

tians were guilty of. No longer could they be turned aside with irony, already an obsolescent weapon as the evil they propagated had gained too much ground. All of Julian's bitterness sprang from the impossibility of treating them casually.

*

Polytheism corresponds more realistically to the diversity of our bents and impulses, allowing them room to flex, to demonstrate, so that each is free, following its nature, to stretch toward the god that best suits it for the moment. But what undertaking is possible with only one god? What can be made of him, how can he be *used*? With him around, one lives *under constant pressure*. Monotheism encapsulates our sensibility: it deepens us while cramping us. A system of constraints that confers upon us an inner dimension by stunting the outgrowth of our powers, it stands as a barrier, it hinders our expansion, it unhinges us. We were undoubtedly more *normal* having several gods than we are having only one. If *health* is a criterion, what a giant step backward we took with monotheism!

Under the regime of plural gods, zeal parcels itself up; when it addresses itself to only one god it becomes dense and exasperated, ultimately turning into aggressiveness, into *faith*. Energy, instead of being scattered, flows in a single direction. The remarkable thing about paganism is that it did not make a radical distinction between believing and not believing, between having faith and not. Besides, faith is a Christian invention; it presupposes the same unbalance in man and in God alike, the two carried away by a dialogue as dramatic as it is delirious—whence the frantic character of the new religion. The old, far more *human*, allowed you the option of choosing whatever god you wanted; since it didn't impose any one, it was for you to show your partiality. The flightier one was, the more often one felt the need to change, to forsake one for another, being pretty certain to find a way of loving them all in the course of one's lifetime. Moreover, they were modest, requiring nothing more than respect; one greeted them without having to genuflect. They were perfectly suited to the person whose contradictions had not been resolved, nor ever could be, to the mind divided and unappeased: what luck he had, being able

in the midst of his wandering turmoil to *try* them all out, with the likelihood of falling on the very one he needed most at any given moment! Once Christianity triumphed, the freedom to browse among them and to choose according to one's fancy became inconceivable. Their cohabitation, their admirable promiscuity was done for. Would an esthete, weary of paganism but not yet sick to death of it, have adhered to the new religion had he had some inkling that it was going to spread over so many centuries? Would he have swapped the whimsy inherent in a regime of interchangeable idols for a cult whose god was to enjoy such terrifying longevity?

Man gave himself gods supposedly because of a need to feel protected, guaranteed, but in reality out of craving to suffer. So long as he believed that there was a multitude of them, he could play his game boldly, having allowed himself loopholes; but when subsequently he limited himself to only one, he merely added to his shackles and pangs. One would be hard pressed to find another animal carrying self-love and self-hatred to the point of vice, needlessly shouldering such a heavy yoke. How cruel we are harnessing ourselves to the Great Spectre, riveting our fate to his! The *one and only* god makes life unbreathable.

Christianity used the legal rigor of the Romans and the philosophical acrobatics of the Greeks, not to free the mind but to hobble it. In so doing, it forced it to grow deeper, to descend inside itself. Dogmas imprison it, set outward limits it must not under any circumstances trespass; at the same time, they leave it free to roam through its own universe, to explore its own abysses and, so as to escape the tyranny of doctrinal certitudes, to seek being—or its negative equivalent—at the far reaches of every sensation. Ecstasy—the adventure of the bound-up mind—necessarily occurs more frequently in an authoritarian religion than in a liberal one; it represents a leap toward intimacy, a taking asylum in the depths, *the flight towards self*.

Having had, for such a long time, no other refuge than God, we have plunged as far into him as into ourselves (this plunge being our only real exploit in two thousand years); we have sounded his depths and our own, ruined his secrets one by one, worn out and compromised his substance by the two-fold aggression of knowledge and of prayer. The ancients didn't overwork their

gods: they were too elegant to harass them or to make them an object of study. Living before the transition from mythology to theology, they were oblivious of this unrelenting strain which affects the language of the great mystics no less than the blurbs of the catechism. When the here-below becomes synonymous with the unlivable, when we feel that the bond tying us to it has been severed, a remedy may be found not in faith, nor in the negation of faith (the two being expressions of the same infirmity) but in pagan dilettantism or, more precisely, in our notion of it.

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The most serious inconvenience the Christian suffers is not being able to serve, *consciously*, more than one god though in practice he has the leeway to enfeoff himself to several (the veneration of saints!)—a healthy enfeoffment which gave polytheism, against all odds, an indirect lease on life; if not for that, Christianity, in an excessively pure state, would have given rise to universal schizophrenia. With all due respect to Tertullian, *the soul is naturally pagan*. Any god who answers our immediate, our urgent demands represents for us an overflowing of vitality, a “whiplash”; this doesn’t hold if he is foisted upon us or if he corresponds to no particular necessity. Paganism made the mistake of accepting, of accumulating too many gods: it died of generosity and too much understanding, it died for lack of instinct.

If, to overcome the self, that leper, one stakes everything on appearances, it is impossible not to deplore the passing of a religion devoid of drama, of attacks of conscience, of incentives to feel remorse, superficial in its principles and practices alike. In antiquity, philosophy and not religion was deep; in the modern age, “depth” and all the various excruciations that go along with it have their one source in Christianity.

Only eras that have no precise faith (the hellenistic and our own) work at classifying the gods without sorting them into the true and the false. The notion that they could be of equivalent worth becomes unthinkable, however, the moment zeal gains the upper hand. Prayer cannot be addressed to a god who is *probably* true; it would hardly truckle to subtleties, or tolerate gradations within the supreme: even when it doubts, it does so in the name

of truth. *One does not beseech a nuance.* This has been the case only since the calamity of monotheism. Pagan piety worked differently. In *Octavius*, the author, Minucius Felix, before he gets around to defending the Christian position, has Cecilius, the representative of paganism, say: "We see national deities being worshipped: Ceres in Eleusis, Cybele in Phrygia, Esculapius in Epidaurus, Belus in Chaldea, Astarte in Syria, Diana in Tauris, Mercury among the Gauls and in Rome, all of them put together." And he adds, speaking of the Christian god, the only unaccepted one: "Where does he come from, this god standing alone, lonely, forsaken, whom no free nation, no kingdom recognizes?"

According to an old Roman prescription, no one could worship in private new or foreign gods if they hadn't first been admitted by the State, or, to be more precise, by the Senate, the only body entitled to decide which deserved adoption and which not. The Christian god, arising on the outskirts of the Empire, reaching Rome by underground channels, would later avenge himself handsomely for having had to be smuggled in.

A civilization is not destroyed till its gods have been destroyed. The Christians, not daring to make a frontal assault on the Empire, took it out on its religion. They allowed themselves to be persecuted the better to fulminate against it, to satisfy their irrepressible appetite to execrate. How miserable they would have been if Rome hadn't deigned to promote them to the rank of victims! Everything about paganism, even its tolerance, exasperated them. Anchored in their certitudes, they couldn't understand how anyone would resign himself, as the pagans did, to likelihoods or follow a cult whose priests, ordinary magistrates assigned to go through the motions of ritual, didn't burden anybody with the crushing chore of *sincerity*.

When one repeats to oneself that life is endurable only if one can change gods, that monotheism contains the seeds of every form of tyranny, ancient slavery doesn't seem in the least pitiful. Better to be a slave and have the right to worship the gods of one's choice than to be "free" yet have no alternative to a single variety of the divine. Freedom is the right to *difference*; being plurality, it postulates a scattering of the absolute and the latter's resolution in a dust-cloud of truths at once justified and provisional. In liberal democracy there is a subjacent (or, if you like, subconscious)

polytheism; conversely, every authoritarian regime has an element of disguised monotheism. How odd the workings of monotheistic logic: directly a pagan became Christian he fell prey to bigotry. It would be preferable to sink with a mass of lenient gods than to thrive in the shadow of a despot! Living in an era where, for lack of religious conflicts, we are witnessing ideological ones, we find ourselves faced with the same question that obsessed waning antiquity: "How can one give up so many gods for only one?"—except the sacrifice asked of us is inferior, on the level of opinions rather than gods. Directly a divinity or a doctrine makes claims to supremacy freedom is menaced. If one assigns supreme value to tolerance, any attack on it should be considered a crime, starting with those campaigns of conversion the Church is a past master at organizing. If, moreover, the latter presented a distortedly grave picture of the persecutions it suffered, and ludicrously padded the number of its martyrs, it was because, having been so long an instrument of oppression, it had to hide its heinous crimes beneath noble pretexts; by letting pernicious doctrines go unpunished, wouldn't it have betrayed those who sacrificed themselves in its name? Thus, in a spirit of fidelity, it proceeded to liquidate those who "strayed" and, having been persecuted for four centuries, persecuted for fourteen. That is the secret, the *miracle* of its everlasting life. Never have martyrs been avenged more zealously and systematically.

The advent of Christianity having coincided with that of the Empire, certain Fathers (Eusebius among others) held that this coincidence had a deeper meaning: one God—one Emperor. In reality, the abolition of national barriers made it possible to move freely through a vast territory without frontiers, allowing Christianity to infiltrate the State and rage across it. Had it not been able to spread with such ease, it would have remained a mere dissident sect within the confines of Judaism instead of becoming an invading religion, and, what is still more onerous, a propagandistic one. It stopped at nothing to recruit, to assert itself, and to range abroad, even holding funerals in the daytime, a display offensive to pagans as well as to the Olympian gods. Julian observes that, according to the law-makers of old, "life and death differing in every respect, acts appropriate to one or the other should be segregated." This segregation the Christians, given their

rabid proselytism, were not prepared to observe: they knew very well how useful the cadaver was, what advantages could be drawn from it. Not that paganism conjured death away, but it was careful not to make a spectacle of it. It held, as a fundamental tenet, that death is not consonant with broad daylight, that it is an insult to light; it belonged to night and the nether gods. The Galileans covered everything with sepulchres, said Julian, who never refers to Jesus by any other name than "the dead one." For pagans worthy of the name, the new superstition could only seem an exploitation, a capitalizing on the ghastly, so that they must have found the inroads it was making on every level of society all the more deplorable. What Celsus couldn't have known, but what Julian knew perfectly well, was that Christianity had camp followers who, unable to subscribe to it wholeheartedly, tried nonetheless to follow along, afraid of being excluded from the "future" if they stayed behind. Out of opportunism or out of fear of loneliness, they wanted to walk alongside these men "born yesterday" but on the verge of being summoned to assume the role of masters, of torturers.

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However legitimate Julian's passion for the defunct gods, he didn't stand a chance of resuscitating them. Rather than bend himself to such a futile task, he would have done better to join forces, in rage, with the Manicheans and together with them undermine the Church. Thus, sacrificing his ideal, he would at least have satisfied his rancor. Vengeance was his only remaining trump card. A magnificent career as a spoiler lay before him, and he might have realized it had his eyes not been veiled with nostalgia for Olympus. One doesn't wage wars in the name of regret. It's true he died young, after a reign of barely two years; if only he had had ten or twenty to avail himself of, what a service he could have rendered us! He wouldn't have suppressed Christianity, but he would have forced it to behave more humbly. We would be less vulnerable, not disporting ourselves as if we were the center of the universe, as if everything, *even God*, revolved about us. We have never been saddled with a more dangerous bit of flattery than the Incarnation. It granted us exorbitant status out of all pro-

portion to what we are. By giving the human anecdote the dignity of a cosmic drama, it fooled us about our insignificance, it shoved us into illusion, into that morbid optimism which, flying in the face of evidence, pictures our trudging along as apotheosis. Antiquity, being more reflective, put man in his place. When Tacitus wonders whether events are governed by eternal laws or whether they unfold haphazardly, he doesn't really supply an answer, he leaves the question hanging in mid-air, and this indecision nicely expresses a feeling prevalent among the ancients. More than anyone, the historian, faced with that mixture of constants and variables making up the historical process, is naturally compelled to sway between determinism and contingency, between laws and caprice, between Physics and Fortune. There is scarcely a misfortune we could not ascribe, as we choose, either to a lapse of providence, or to the indifference of chance, or else to the inflexibility of fate. This trinity, so convenient anybody can use it, especially the undeceived mind, is the most consoling thing pagan wisdom has to offer. Moderns loathe having recourse to it, just as they loathe the idea, specifically ancient, which holds that good things and evil amount to a fixed sum nothing can modify. Obsessed with progress and regression, we implicitly admit that evil changes, either diminishing or increasing. The idea of a world identical with itself, condemned to be what it is, its attributes fixed for all time, this lovely idea no longer has currency; that's just it, the *future*, an object of hope or of loathing, is our true *abode*—we live in it, it is *everything* for us. The obsession with coming events, which is essentially Christian, by reducing time to the concept of the imminent and the possible, makes us unfit to conceive an immobile moment reposing within itself, spared from the scourge of succession. So unsuited are we to a static vision that waiting, even when devoid of all content, is a void that fulfills us, an anxiety that reassures us. "God has no need to correct his work"—this opinion of Celsus', which is that of an entire civilization, runs against our grain, our instincts, our very being. We are able to ratify it only in a singular mood, during a *fit* of wisdom. It even runs counter to what the believer thinks, for the thing religious circles, more than others, reproach God for is his self-satisfaction, his indifference to the quality of his work and his refusal to smooth out its irregularities. We will pay any price

for a little *future*. Belief in the Last Judgment laid the ideological groundwork for belief in the *meaning* of history; more than that, the whole philosophy of history is just a by-product of the idea of a Last Judgment. It's useless for us to lean toward this cyclical theory or that, all we can manage is an abstract adherence; in fact we behave as if history unfolded along a straight line, as if the various civilizations that followed one another were part of a grand design whose name varies according to our beliefs and ideologies, steps it takes toward its assertion and fulfilment.



If false gods no longer exist for us, what better proof have we that our faith is anemic? It is difficult to see how, for a believer, the god to whom he prays and some totally different god could be equally legitimate. Faith is exclusion, a challenging. Because it can no longer detest the other religions, because it *understands* them, Christianity is through; it shows an increasing lack of that vitality which gave rise to intolerance. Yet intolerance was its very backbone. Much to its misfortune, it has ceased to be monstrous. Like declining polytheism, it is beset, paralyzed by an excessively open mind. Its god has no more prestige in our eyes than did Jupiter for the played-out pagans.

What does all this chatter about "the death of God" amount to if not proof of Christianity's demise? One dare not openly attack religion, so one takes it out on the foreman, whom one criticizes for being behind the times, timid, moderate. A god who has squandered his stock of cruelty is no longer feared or respected by anyone. We bear the stamp of all those centuries in which believing in him meant fearing him, in which our fright imagined him at once commiserating and unscrupulous. Whom would he intimidate now, with believers themselves feeling that he is outmoded, that he can no longer be reconciled with the present, let alone the future? And just as paganism had to make way for Christianity, so the latter will have to bow before some new belief; stripped of its aggressiveness, it no longer presents an obstacle to the uprising of new gods; all they have to do is rise up, and perhaps they will. It's unlikely they will have the face or even the mask of the old gods, but they will be formidable nonetheless.

For the person who finds freedom the equivalent of vertigo, a faith, whatever its origin, even if it were anti-religious, is a salutary fetter, a wished-for, dreamed-of chain whose purpose it would be to restrain curiosity and fever, to allay the anguish of the indefinite. When this faith wins out and ensconces itself, what results immediately is a reduction in the *number* of problems one must contend with, and along with this, an almost tragic diminution of alternatives. The burden of choice is lifted; your choices are made for you. This is precisely why refined pagans allowed themselves to be seduced by the new religion: they were counting on it to opt for them, to give them directions so they would no longer have to hesitate on the threshold of so many temples, nor fumble among so many gods. The religious effervescence *without credo* characterizing every alexandrian era ends with lassitude, with a repudiation of the mind's wanderings. The co-existence of truths is denounced because, no longer satisfied with the *little* each offers, one aspires to the whole, but a limited, circumscribed, *guaranteed* whole, so great is man's fear of falling from the universal into the uncertain, from the uncertain into the precarious and amorphous. The tumble paganism took in its time Christianity is now taking. It is collapsing, it is dying to collapse, which makes it tolerable to unbelievers, more and more disposed in its favor. Even after paganism had been conquered, the Christians continued to abominate it; they were maniacs incapable of forgetting, whereas today everyone has forgiven Christianity. Already in the eighteenth century, every argument against it had been exhausted. Like a poison that has lost its efficacy, it can no longer save or damn anybody. But it overturned too many gods not, in all fairness, to suffer the very fate it reserved for them. The hour of their revenge has tolled. They must be overjoyed to see their worst enemy brought as low as they, since it accepts them all without exception. In its heyday it razed temples and raped consciences wherever it cared to show up. A new god, though crucified a thousand times over, doesn't know what pity is, smashes everything in his way, is dead set on occupying as much space as possible. Thus he makes us pay dearly for not having recognized him earlier. So long as he was obscure he might possess a certain charm: we hadn't yet detected in him the stigmata of victory.

A religion is never more "noble" than when it gets to the stage

of seeing itself as a superstition and, standing beside itself, witnesses its own undoing. Christianity took shape and flowered in hatred of everything that was not itself; this hatred sustained it throughout its career; now that the career is finished, so is the hatred. Christ will not descend again into Hell: he has been put back into his grave and this time he will stay there. It's unlikely he will ever rise from it again; he no longer has a *soul* to deliver, either above ground or beneath. Just thinking of the excesses that accompanied his advent, one can't help but evoke Rutilius Namatianus, the last pagan poet, exclaiming: "Would to heaven that Judea had never been conquered!"

Since it has now been admitted that the gods are indiscriminately true, why stop mid-way, why not extol them all? That would be the Church's supreme accomplishment: it would perish while bowing before its victims. . . . There are signs that it feels tempted to do just that. Thus, following the example of the ancient temples, it would make it a point of honor to collect divinities, wrecks from all over. But, once again, the *true* god must efface himself before all the others can spring back to life.

[*Translated by Frederick Brown*]

HERBERT READ

The Cult of Sincerity

One can never know one's own life, or rather there is almost always something within us which does not wish to become aware of itself.

—Jean Guéhenno, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

I

SINCERITY! ALL MY LIFE I have been reproved for attempting to use this word, and rightly so because the very notion of sincerity implies a consciousness of one's self as a circumscribed entity, a "single one" (Kierkegaard) or a "unique one" (Stirner), to be defined and defended, and that state of self-consciousness is itself insincere. What then is sincere?—perhaps only an unwitting naivety: the naivety of a child before it has eaten of the fruits of the tree of knowledge and still lives in an unreflecting state of innocence. Some rare geniuses may be able to recall a momentary awareness or retain a memory-trace of that state and then endeavour to establish its existence in their own hearts and minds—Traherne and Blake are examples from English literature, but even their innocence is suspect. The very consciousness of innocence is at the same time a consciousness of experience. We may make the distinction and cultivate innocence; but such a conscious decision is sophisticated and therefore no longer sincere.

Rousseau is the high priest of this cult and the undying fascination of his *Confessions*, *Reveries* and *Dialogues* lies in the fact that all these autobiographical writings are attempts to define and defend a self. An attempt to define sincerity might be sincere but the word definition implies a fixed outline, seen from a particular point of view. For this reason Rousseau criticized Montaigne, his great predecessor in the cult of sincerity: he had painted himself only in profile. Rousseau tried hard to avoid that limitation, but he did not succeed—his *Confessions* were abandoned at the point where they became too tormenting to himself, too insincere. It is true that he had succeeded in making "a clean breast" (our English idiom is very expressive) of those "sins" which had haunted him all his subsequent life—the false witness he bore

against a servant-girl when she was charged with a theft he had himself committed and the abandonment of his five children to the foundling hospital—but again it must be pointed out that the confession of sins is not necessarily an act of sincerity: it is not a disinterested act and in any case Rousseau did not make a public confession—his *Confessions* were not published during his lifetime. In his introduction to the *La Pléiade* edition, which is now the best available, Marcel Raymond points out that the classical prototype of all confessors, Saint Augustine, again confines himself to the sins of his youth, and that his object is not so much to reveal a man (himself) “*dans toute la vérité de la nature*” (Rousseau’s famous phrase in the opening paragraph of his *Confessions*) but to reveal a sinner who turns towards God for forgiveness, and is therefore more concerned to know God than to know himself. The revelation is of the self as sinner, the self in an attitude of contrition, desiring absolution. Rousseau, too, never escapes from this self-regarding attitude of abnegation, and much as he intends to be “absolutely” sincere, his good intention is not achieved because, as M. Raymond points out, his pride compels him to prevaricate, even to lie. He cannot rid himself of the conviction that his true self is naturally innocent, and that his sins were in some sense acts of insincerity. He did not—rather, by his very nature, *could not*—commit a sin sincerely.

What, then, is sincerity? “Yours sincerely” is now in English the commonest formula for concluding a letter—that is to say, the most insincere. And yet no other word expresses so well the rectitude, the exactitude we aspire to in presenting ourselves to the world. Ours is an age of confessions—never were so many autobiographies and autobiographical novels written, published and read by an eager public. Rousseau himself would not have revealed (or committed) the enormities expressed in the confessional writings of Céline, Miller, Burroughs and many others. And yet are these writings “sincere”? Gone, of course, is any claim to natural innocence; these writers would rather boast of their natural depravity and claim the virtue of courage for their self-exposures. But compared with Rousseau (or Augustine or Montaigne) their confessions end by boring us. This may be partly a question of style: Rousseau was a superb artist: every sentence vibrates with passion and restraint. Our modern writers

do not know the meaning of restraint (“*mesure*” in expression), with the result that their phrasing is crude and repetitive, their structure fragmentary, their tone devoid of eloquence. Such literary values they might condemn as “insincere,” so again we return to the question we began with—what is sincerity?

In an early work (*English Prose Style*, 1928) I declared that “the only thing . . . indispensable for the possession of a good style is personal sincerity” and I associated (in several places) sincerity with passion. “Those who would persuade us of the truth of a statement must rely, not on an air of conviction or a show of reason, but on the compelling force of an emotional attitude.” Rousseau would have agreed with such an irrational doctrine, but its pragmatic truth depends on the word “persuade.” Equally, there is equivocation in the word “good”—a good style is not necessarily a precise style—the whole art or science of rhetoric is involved. The real question is the effectiveness of a particular style for a particular purpose, a question which Bonamy Dobrée and I analyzed in *The London Book of English Prose* (1932). If the particular purpose is confessional, we may with justice demand “personal sincerity.” Sincerity is then closely related to passionate conviction. Confession is not self-analysis, in any clinically objective sense. Confession naturally takes the form of a narrative—a narrative about oneself. “*Moi seul. Je sens mon coeur et je connois les hommes.*” But “*sentir son coeur*” is a privilege only granted to the exceptional man—the one who has the ability to find words that exactly (or, *to himself*, convincingly) express his feelings.

His feelings as they flow spontaneously from his contacts with nature and with man. Since each individual is unique, his feelings will be peculiar to himself, and he must find the exact words to express this peculiarity. He is sincere in the degree of the exactitude of this equation. Feeling comes in aid of feeling, as Wordsworth said: the feeling for the value of the words helps to define the feeling itself. That is what I mean by sincerity, but I do not wish to disguise the difficulty, and the rarity, of the process. The common failure is to allow habitual words and phrases, flowing spontaneously from the memory, to determine and deform the feelings. The whole exercise is one of exquisite perception and instinctive judgement.

II

On several occasions I have drawn attention to the writings of an American psychologist, Ernest Schachtel, on childhood amnesia. Why do we forget our childhood? With rare exceptions we have no memory of our first four, five, or six years, and yet we have only to watch the development of our own children during this period to realize that these are precisely the most exciting, the most formative years of life. Schachtel's theory is that our infantile experiences, so free, so uninhibited, are suppressed because they are incompatible with the conventions of an adult society which we call "civilized." The infant is a savage and must be tamed, domesticated. The process is so gradual and so universal that only exceptionally will an individual child escape it, to become perhaps a genius, perhaps the selfish individual we call a criminal. The significance of this theory for the problem of sincerity in art (and in life) is that occasionally the veil of forgetfulness that hides our infant years is lifted and then we recover all the force and vitality that distinguished our first experiences—the "celestial joys" of which Traherne speaks, when the eyes feast for the first time and insatiably on the beauties of God's creation. Those childhood experiences, when we "enjoy the World aright," are indeed sincere, and we may therefore say that we too are sincere when in later years we are able to recall these innocent sensations. Such moments of re-vision are momentary, but their very rarity makes them significant (makes them aesthetic) and our works of art are given their essential vitality by successive injections of this primary experience.

All this has been described beautifully, intimately, even scientifically in Proust's great novel, whose very title, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, reveals the secret motive of all art—at least, of all art that is "music," in the sense that memory, as the Greek myth has it, is the mother of the muses. We need no other theory of inspiration, especially if we take account of the all-inclusiveness of the child's curiosity.

Everything is new to the newborn child. His gradual grasp of his environment and of the world around him are discoveries which, in experiential scope and quality, go far beyond any discovery that the most adventurous and daring explorer will ever make in his adult

life. No Columbus, no Marco Polo has ever seen stranger and more fascinating and thoroughly absorbing sights than the child that learns to perceive, to taste, to smell, to touch, to hear and see, and to use his body, his senses and his mind. No wonder the child shows an insatiable curiosity. He has the whole world to discover.¹

These are the sensations and feelings that are gradually blunted by education, staled by custom, rejected in favour of social conformity.

Included in this childhood experience are not only sensations in the normal sense—sights and sounds, tastes and smells, graspings and gropings—but the first hearing of words, the first association of a particular word with a particular thing, the word itself *as a thing*. Poetry is nothing but the recovery of that magical experience. We may use words to describe events, to express thoughts, to establish reality, but their peculiar poetry is derived from the associations they have with our childhood experiences, when we first discover that things have names, and that these names fit them with poetic justness.

If this equation of poetry and primal vision is accepted, we may abandon the very concept of sincerity: it is no longer necessary as an aesthetic value. But it survives as a moral value, and that is the sense in which we apply it to confessional writing. That, through all the mental prevarications of the *Confessions*, is Rousseau's concern: to assert the supreme moral value of native feelings of innocence. Similarly, Blake's *Songs of Innocence* celebrate the moral value of innocence, but they are not themselves innocent—they are very sophisticated. All art is artifice, and therefore no work of art is sincere. Once we become conscious of a feeling and attempt to make a corresponding form, we are engaged in an activity which, far from being sincere, is prepared (as any artist if he is "sincere" will tell you) to moderate the feeling to fit the form. The artist's feeling for form is stronger than a formless feeling. Art is the definition, the delimitation, of feeling. To quote a powerful image of Stravinsky's (in *The Poetics of Music*) the lava is already cold by the time it has assumed a form. When we recognize feeling in a work of art, it is not the artist's feeling; it is our own feeling transferred to a ready form. A work of art is a feeling in-formed.

¹ Ernest G. Schachtel, *Metamorphosis* (Basic Books, 1959), p. 292.

That is why it is possible for art to reconcile inner conflicts. So long as the inner drives, motives, passions involved in a conflict (and thereby constituting a psychosis) remain undefined, it is not possible to resolve the conflict. The conflict is, however, resolved by means of a symbolic form, a unitary structure in which conflicting forces are reconciled. Not all art is tragic, but tragedy is the highest form of art and the paradigm of its reconciliatory function.

III

Sincerity, we may conclude, is a moral and not an aesthetic virtue, but all activities may be subjected, *ab extra*, to moral judgement. About this "subjection" there has been much confusion in our time, of political and specifically Marxian motivation. The extreme point of view, recently asserted in the Chinese Republic, is in effect an apotheosis of moral judgement. Not even Kierkegaard could have made such a complete separation and subordination of the aesthetic judgement. The Russian politicians, especially during the Stalinist period, condemned the non-committed artist, and above all an artist like Pasternak who dared to use his art critically. Abstract art was condemned, not so much because it was "pure," but rather because it was associated with the art of the bourgeois west, and was therefore reactionary. Art should be "in the service of the revolution," and in that sense it should be "proletarian." But in spite of the introduction of new "types" and new "situations," proletarian art remained essentially the same as the academic art of the bourgeoisie. The difference between Sholokhov and Tolstoy, or between any Soviet painter and any Tsarist painter, is not an aesthetic difference. The more Soviet art strove to be different, the more it remained the same thing.

The Chinese now have the ambition to create a totally new kind of art, breaking abruptly with their "traditional" art, which they preserve for historical reasons, and in which they even take a nationalistic and possessive pride. But revolutionary art, Maoist art, is to be something quite different. We wait for any convincing manifestations of this new art, and meanwhile may conclude that

it too, the more it strives to be different, the more it will remain the same thing.

Art remains the same thing because human nature remains the same thing—a “thing,” a fact of nature, socialized, civilized, domesticated, but not changed in any basic sense from prehistoric times. Art, as I have often argued, is not only a civilizing agency (the “order” of society being an aesthetic concept, as Plato argued); it is also a progressive agency, in that it can modify (direct, concentrate, focus) human sensibility. The organism remains the same—the same nervous system, the same recording brain—but it is “tuned” to a different pitch, and this pitch determines our ability to create a “world vision,” that is to say, “the whole complex of ideas, aspirations and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which, in most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which opposes them to the members of other social groups.”² It is such a world vision, original and opposed to the world visions of the capitalist past, that the Chinese are endeavouring to create. But it is a mistake to assume that they can do it by any other means than those which have created the world visions of the past—the refinement and focussing of the aesthetic sensibility through the agency of the artist. The artist is not a different kind of man—he is a “prole” with the rest of struggling humanity—but he has a particular sphere of work (the creation of *works* of art, symbolic structures, myths) and he specializes in certain techniques—poetry, painting, sculpture, music—with the aim of linking together “the whole complex” of ideas, aspirations and feelings that give meaning to the life of the community. Those ideas, aspirations and feelings are vague and formless until the artist comes along with his informing techniques. But these techniques, though made perfect by practice, are not determined by social or political aims. They are technical skills: part of a human being’s acquired physical and mental equipment. The pick may be transformed into a ploughshare and finally be driven through the soil by a tractor, but the purpose remains the same—to turn the unchanging sod. All the inventions that constitute man’s “progress” do not change the essential purpose of the instrument nor the material it cultivates. In the same way, the structure of society may change, the methods of production and

² Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God* (Humanities, 1964).

distribution; but the function of the work of art does not change, nor its means, nor its methods; it is an instrument for tilling the human psyche, that it may continue to yield a harvest of vital beauty.

IV

I return to the problem of sincerity. Though we must admit that it is a moral rather than an aesthetic virtue, I am still conscious of the fact that all sincere confessions are invariably works of art, and this is not so much a question of their form, which may be rambling, but of their style. But what is style? Yeats (in *Ideas of Good and Evil*) speaks of "the continuous indefinable symbolism which is the substance of all style," and explains that:

All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions; and when sound, and colour, and forms are in a musical relation, a beautiful relation to one another, they become, as it were, one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion.

This we might take as an elaboration of Schachtel's theory, for what can those disembodied powers be but buried sensations of sound, colour, and form that have retained, ready for release, all their pristine vigour, their "preordained energies"? The deliberate act (or action) of recall, if successful, reanimates those long forgotten associations, in all their "continuous, indefinable symbolism."

The symbolism is indefinable because it has been formulated in the unconscious, that region of the mind where buried memories associate and marry, drawn together by their sensuous affinity or "musical relation." It is true that a writer's style is not always, and even not often, formed by the effort of recollection. Rousseau wrote his various Discourses and *Le Contrat Social* before he even contemplated his *Confessions*, and most autobiographies have been afterthoughts of a busy career. But if Schachtel is right and if I understand Yeats properly, every kind of writing that is not rational and enumerative is in some sense metaphorical, or,

as Yeats would prefer to say, symbolical and he mentions, not only beautiful lines that are easy to remember, but also "some line that is quite simple, that gets its beauty from its place in a story, and see how it flickers with the light of the many symbols that have given the story its beauty, as a sword-blade may flicker with the light of burning towers."

In support of these general observations is the curious fact that some of the most beautiful autobiographies have been written by men (and women) of an unpoetical nature. I am using "unpoetical" in its technical sense, meaning writers not capable of poetic composition. I will not include among these one of the most beautiful autobiographies in any language, John Ruskin's, for much of his prose, like Pater's, is poetic in all but formal arrangement. Carlyle is not poetical in this sense, though he has great eloquence; but his reminiscences of his father and of his wife, Jane Welsh, are symbolical in Yeats's sense: they flicker, if not with the light of burning towers, at least with the glow of a consuming remorse and self-pity. But it is time to draw a distinction between those autobiographies that are merely narrational, and keep to the surface of events, such as those of Gibbon and John Stuart Mill, and those that are confessional, in the sense already defined, such as those of Rousseau, De Quincey, Amiel, Newman, Tolstoy, Jung. The problem of sincerity does not arise in the case of Gibbon or Mill; they aim to be truthful, which is not the same. Gibbon, of course, is occasionally eloquent, as in the famous passage describing his emotions on completing the *Decline and Fall*; but Mill's *Autobiography* is, as Sir Leslie Stephen complained, almost wholly lacking in the qualities which give charm to that class of literature. Even Harold Laski, a great admirer of Mill, who quotes this complaint in his Introduction to the World's Classics edition of the *Autobiography* (1924) admits that "even his most intimate friends are judged much as a writer would judge a person whose obituary estimate he had been charged to compile." And this was a deliberate policy on Mill's part: he wished his narrative to be unemotional, objective. That might even be his conception of sincerity.

Psychoanalysis has made us all suspicious of "the objective truth." We know now that it is a construction of the intellect (of the super-ego, as Freud calls it) and though such a truth may

be socially viable, and even indispensable for the maintenance of a certain way of life, of the fabric of a civilization we have slowly elaborated from generation to generation, it is not the whole truth, for the whole truth is subjective, and only to be represented symbolically. But the question for the autobiographer is whether this subjective truth can be represented in any other way—or, to be more specific, objectively. Can the truth as Rousseau wished to present it be expressed in the style of Mill? For that matter, could Mill have reconciled any truth about himself with a "System of Logic"? A genuine difficulty for any rationalist, as we see in this passage from the *Autobiography*:

I also resumed my speculations on this last subject (Logic), and puzzled myself, like others before me, with the great paradox of the discovery of new truths by general reasoning. As to the fact, there could be no doubt. As little could it be doubted, that all reasoning is resolvable into syllogisms, and that in every syllogism the conclusion is actually contained and implied in the premises. How, being so contained and implied, it could be a new truth, and how the theorems of geometry, so different in appearance from the definitions and axioms, could be all contained in these, was a difficulty which no one, I thought, had sufficiently felt, and which, at all events, no one had succeeded in clearing up.

Except, perhaps, the author of *Alice in Wonderland*. Mill, as he confesses, took to the poetry of Wordsworth as an escape from the syllogism. Wordsworth alone, for "compared with the greatest poets, he may be said to be the poet of unpoetical natures, possessed of quiet and contemplative tastes. But," Mill admits, "unpoetical natures are precisely those which require poetic cultivation."

There is a distinction here between poetry and truth, or poetry and experience, and most people, however unconsciously, maintain such a distinction. A conflict arises when the poet would be truthful, as Wordsworth tried to be in *The Prelude*. But we know that he was not truthful in this confessional poem—he suppressed, or disguised, important events in his life. He himself knew that he had not succeeded in his aim, and shortly after completing it (in 1805) confessed to Sir George Beaumont that the day of its completion "was not a happy day for me; I was dejected on many accounts, when I looked back upon the performance it seemed to have a dead weight about it, the reality so far short of the perform-

ance. . . ."³ This may only be the common reaction that comes to any conscientious author on completing a work and comparing the outcome with the first intention, but he did not allow the poem to be published until 1850 and in the intervening years tinkered with the text in a manner which shows that his dissatisfaction was not merely textual, but concerned the substance and truth of his confession.

In addition to his *Confessions* Rousseau wrote, late in his life, three dialogues to which he gave the title *Rousseau Juge de Jean Jacques*. It is a very curious and significant work, and comes to the heart of the problem we are discussing. Rousseau separates himself into two selves, the self he was born, his true self, and the self he has been compelled to become by circumstances, and above all by the calumnies and subterfuges of his enemies. It is perhaps the same distinction that the modern psychologists make between the persona, the confident self we present to the public, the mask we wear and the self beneath the mask, sensitive and diffident and subject to self-doubt: the ideal self and the real self. Most autobiographies present the ideal self and do so without any intentional deception. In English we do not habitually make the French distinction between *amour-propre* (self-respect) and *amour de soi* (self-love). Self-respect degenerates into pride, self-love into selfishness or egotism, but Rousseau is concerned to affirm the child-like innocence of self-love and its divine origin in the love of God. Wordsworth too, in his *Ode*:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy . . .

The Youth still is "Nature's Priest"

And by the vision splendid
is on his way attended;

but then:

At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

³ *Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford University, 1935), p. 497.

But Rousseau does not see this progress as a natural development, but rather as a gradual perversion of innocence. In the character of Rousseau he speaks of Jean Jacques in these terms (*Deuxième Dialogue*):

Of all the men I have known the one whose character derives most clearly from his temperament is J.J. He is as nature made him: education has only slightly modified him. If at the moment of his birth his faculties and energies had developed suddenly, from that time onwards one would have found him almost as he was in his maturity, and now after sixty years of trials and tribulations, time, adversity and men have still not changed him much. Whilst his body has aged and is broken, his heart remains ever young; he retains the same tastes, the same passions that he had in his younger days and until the end of his life he will never cease to be an old child.

Rousseau's purpose, therefore, in his *Confessions* was to establish the inevitability (and therefore the innocence) of the course of his life. He became what he was, in the sense of the command: Become what thou art! His end was in his beginning, and the beginning was innocent. It is true he had committed sins, but he could explain why such an innocent nature as his had been led to commit them, and of course he would not have committed them if circumstances had not been against him. Even that most heinous sin, the sending of his five children one after the other to the foundlings' home, could be explained away as a sacrifice for their real benefit: he had neither the means, nor the ability, to give them a better upbringing. Rousseau pretended that he had been forced to abandon his children by Mme. Le Vasseur, the mother of the woman who lived with him for thirty-three years, from 1745 until his death in 1778. But he does not explain why he could not have abandoned Mme. Le Vasseur instead of his children. Presumably Thérèse would not allow him, and there is no doubt about his commitment to her—cf. his letter to Mme. de Luxembourg dated 12th June 1761:

I did not marry the mother, nor was I in any way obliged to do so, since before we lived together I told her that I would not marry her; in any case, a public marriage would have been impossible because of the difference of religion; I have, nevertheless, always loved and respected her as my wife, because of her kindness of heart, her unparalleled unselfishness, and her absolute fidelity—in

respect of which she has never given me the slightest cause for suspicion.

It has been pointed out by Jean Gu  henno that during his lifetime Rousseau never admitted the truth about his children, and when questioned, he lied. "The admission is to be found only in works which were to be published after his death." So much for his sincerity, then! But M. Gu  henno also points out that there can be no doubt that Rousseau regretted this "sin," and that his work is in many respects "his rumination on his remorse." *Emile* in particular would not have been written, or written with so much force and feeling, had he not been brought to consider the rights of children in contemplation of the wrongs he had committed against his own children—"he was only able to explain what was right because he knew what it was to have done wrong."⁴

Yes, Madame, I put my children in the Foundlings' Home; I entrusted them to the institution whose function it is to provide such support. Since my poverty and my disabilities prevented me fulfilling this dear duty myself, I should be pitied for my misfortune rather than reproached with a crime. I owe my children a living; I secured one for them that was better, or at least more reliable, than any I myself could have provided: This is the primary point to be considered. After this comes the identification of their mother, who must not be dishonoured.

You know my situation: I earn my living, with some difficulty, from one day to the next. How could I, in addition, feed a family? And if I were obliged to resort to the writer's craft, how would I achieve the tranquility of mind necessary for lucrative work, if my garret were filled with domestic cares and the disturbance of children? Writings dictated by hunger bring in little, and this source of income is quickly exhausted. It would therefore be necessary to find protectors and to indulge in intrigue and manoeuvring; to seek some base employment and eke it out by the usual means to make sure that it provided me with a living and was not taken from me; in short, to stoop to all those infamous acts which inspire me with so justifiable a horror. Would I nourish my children and their mother on the life-blood of the needy? Never, Madame. It is better that they should be orphans than that they should have a rascal as their father.

Afflicted, as I am, with a painful and mortal illness, I cannot hope to live much longer; even if, during my lifetime, I could support these unfortunates doomed to eventual suffering, they would pay

⁴ *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, tr. by John and Doreen Weightman (Columbia University, 1966), II, ix-xx.

dear for the advantage of having been brought up in slightly more refined circumstances than those in which they are at present. Their mother, victimized by my intemperate zeal and burdened with her own shame and her own needs, almost as much an invalid as I am and still less in a position to ensure their upkeep, would be forced to leave them to their own devices, in which case I see no choice for them but to become shoe-blacks or bandits, the first possibility leading very quickly to the second. If, at least, they had been born in wedlock, they would have found it easier to make their way. What would become of them if, at one and the same time, they had to bear the disgrace of their birth and of their poverty?⁵

This "base, ignoble letter," as Guéhenno calls it, must be quoted in full, because here if anywhere the whole disingenuousness of Rousseau's "sincerity" is betrayed. The man who would be sincere is unconsciously insincere. This confirms the supposition I began with—that a contradiction exists between self-consciousness and sincerity. To be conscious of a self, vis-à-vis other selves, is already to expose that self to corruption. It is not possible to separate the self from others without creating a false entity. I do not wish to get involved in Sartre's distinction between a For-itself and an In-itself, but there are many subtle distinctions of this kind to be made, and they all relate to the degree and kind of our consciousness. In particular,

so long as we considered the for-itself in isolation, we were able to maintain that the unreflective consciousness can not be inhabited by a self; the self was given in the form of an object and only for the reflective consciousness. But here the self comes to haunt the unreflective consciousness. Now the unreflective consciousness is a consciousness of the world. Therefore for the unreflective consciousness the self exists on the level of objects in the world; this role which devolved only on the reflective consciousness—the making-present of the self—belongs now to the unreflective consciousness. Only the reflective consciousness has the self directly for an object.⁶

There is the dilemma which haunted Rousseau all his life: there is the inescapable ambiguity of any pretence of sincerity. Only the self not yet present to the reflective consciousness is sincere. The self present in reflective consciousness is a construct of

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 257-9. Letter of 20th April 1751, to Mme. Francueil.

⁶ *Being and Nothingness*, tr. Hazel E. Barnes (London, 1957), p. 260. Cf. also Martin Buber's discussion of the Self in *Between Man and Man*. Tr. R. G. Smith (London, 1947), *Passim*.

our intelligence, an ego-ideal; and what is ideal is not real. The only reality is Being, non-conscious Being (*être-en-soi*). Being-for-itself and Being-for-others are both, from this strict point of view, degrees of insincerity.

V

Sincerity is often confused with spontaneity—by D. H. Lawrence, for example. But spontaneity (and the “automatism” of the Surrealists) is a physical reflex rather than a state of mind. What Lawrence calls “the pulsating, carnal self” has nothing to do with the self of Kierkegaard or Sartre, or with the “*moi seul*” of Rousseau. Lawrence was not so much concerned with the Self as a separate entity: rather, he would deny the possibility (or desirability) of such separateness. “Give me nothing fixed, set, static. Don’t give me the infinite or the eternal: nothing of infinity, nothing of eternity. Give me the still, white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, Now.”⁷

Such an identification of the self with the Moment, the quick of Time, is really a losing of the self, a dissolution of the self in animal sensation. If we are to identify such carnality with sincerity, sincerity loses all moral value. Whether it loses all aesthetic value is another question: the question, already referred to, of expressionism. Art, in my opinion (and in the opinion of Valéry, Eliot, Yeats and Proust) is precisely the search for the infinite and the eternal. If the self is by definition fluid, inconstant, incandescent, it follows that the self can never be a fit subject for a work of art. The more spontaneous (and in this sense sincere) the expression of the pulsating, carnal self, the less aesthetic (artistic). The dilemma seems to be inescapable.

As for automatism, it substitutes for the pulsating, carnal self the promptings of the unconscious. There are degrees of unconsciousness—degrees of depth and degrees of organization. There is no doubt that some dreams have form in the sense of dramatic form: one cannot exclude the hypothesis of “unconscious” form,

⁷ *Phoenix* (Viking, 1936), p. 219.

that is to say, of forms elaborated in the mind without the conscious participation of the individual (this altogether apart from Jung's hypothesis of "archetypal forms"). The projection of such forms serves to distinguish surrealism from expressionism. Surrealist poetry and painting is not always automatic in any mechanical sense. The images are arranged and even modified in the act of recording them (if only by the process of *Gestaltung*: perceptual coherence, etc.). The images in the poetry of Eluard or in the paintings of Max Ernst are effectively organized. They may rise automatically to the surface of consciousness, but they then assume a functional coherence (the "composition" of the poem or painting).

If the form of the dream is unconscious in origin, it remains inaccessible as a work of art. R. G. Collingwood made this distinction:

It (the dream) is essentially a structure which is, in the terminology of the psycho-analyst, *unconscious*. The dreamer himself is unaware of it until, in collaboration with his psycho-analyst, he brings it to light. The mythological way of stating this fact is to say that the structure was "in the unconscious." This is frankly non-sense . . . because the structure is not in the unconscious but precisely in the dream, for it is the structure of the dream; and the dream is conscious enough . . . the revelation made by psycho-analysis is not the bringing into consciousness of what was unconscious, but the bringing into explicitness of what was implicit, the noticing of something already actually experienced in a light in which it had not been noticed before . . . the new light in question is nothing but the hitherto overlooked structure of the experience in question . . .

The unconscious, in Collingwood's opinion, is "a false abstraction." The reality is "the implicit logical or structural element in the dream." The dreamer is unaware of this structure—that is to say, the structure belongs to the dream and can only be separated from it by a false abstraction.⁸

This may strike the reader as an unnecessarily subtle distinction, but it is fundamental to our problem of sincerity. What becomes of Lawrence's "pulsating, carnal self" if even his dreams are subject to organization, an organization that he does not con-

⁸ Quotations from *Speculum Mentis or The Map of Knowledge*. Oxford (Clarendon Press), 1924, pp. 92-4.

trol, "thought in the form of intuition." Collingwood's point is that the dreamer does not know that he is an artist. The dream must be made explicit, and in so far as the dreamer becomes an artist, "his artistic creation is a self-critical creation, and the criticising moment or concept—the idea of structure or relevance—is always in advance of the criticized moment, the flow of imaginations which it controls." Gone, therefore, is any question of spontaneity, and of sincerity.

Collingwood defines art as a concrete or sensuous activity (at the same time "a life of discipline and endeavour, a struggle to realize one's being in this way and not in that") and sensuous means "intuitive, immediate, *innocent of explicit reason*." But the snag in this definition is the word "explicit," for like all Croceans Collingwood believed in a form of reason that is not explicit, but intuitive. And intuition is associated with innocence, and therefore (by implication) with sincerity. But the innocence of art (its "absence of social or historical structure") "is, in point of fact, tempered by the existence, even in art, of implicit thought; but this implicit thought . . . remains hidden from the artist as such."⁹ So what is conceded with one hand (i.e., innocence) is taken away with the other (i.e. the artifice implied by the word 'thought').

The spontaneous is never without form; art is never wholly spontaneous. What remains that is substantial of the concept of sincerity?

VI

Philosophical anthropology is not intent on reducing philosophical problems to human existence and establishing the philosophical disciplines so to speak from below instead of from above. It is solely intent on knowing man himself. This sets it a task that is absolutely different from all other tasks of thought. For in philosophical anthropology man himself is given to man in the most precise sense as a subject. Here, where the subject is man in his wholeness, the investigator cannot content himself, as in anthropology as an individual science, with considering man as another part of nature and with ignoring the fact that he, the investigator, is himself a man and experiences his humanity in his inner experience in a way that he

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

simply cannot experience any part of nature—not only in a quite different perspective but also in a quite different dimension of being, in a dimension in which he experiences only this one part of all the parts of nature. Philosophical knowledge of man is essentially man's self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*), and man can reflect about himself only when the cognizing person, that is, the philosopher pursuing anthropology, first of all reflects about himself as a person. The principle of individuation, the fundamental fact of the infinite variety of human persons, of whom this one is only one person, of this constitution and no other, does not relativize anthropological knowledge; on the contrary, it gives it its kernel and its skeleton. In order to become genuine philosophical anthropology, everything that is discovered about historical and modern man, about men and women, Indians and Chinese, tramps and emperors, the weak-minded and the genius, must be built up and crystallized round what the philosopher discovers by reflecting about himself. That is a quite different matter from what, say, the psychologist undertakes when he completes and clarifies by reference to his own self in self-observation, self-analysis and experiment, what he knows from literature and observation. For with him it is a matter of individual, objectivized processes and phenomena, of something that is separated from connexion with the whole real person. But the philosophical anthropologist must stake nothing less than his real wholeness, his concrete self. And more; it is not enough for him to stake his self as an *object* of knowledge. He can know the *wholeness* of the person and through it the wholeness of *man* only when he does not leave his *subjectivity* out and does not remain an untouched observer. He must enter, completely, and in reality, into the act of self-reflection, in order to become aware of human wholeness. In other words, he must carry out this act of entry into that unique dimension as an act of his *life*, without any prepared philosophical security; that is, he must expose himself to all that can meet you when you are really living. Here you do not attain to knowledge by remaining on the shore and watching the foaming waves, you must make the venture and cast yourself in, you must swim, alert and with all your force, even if a moment comes when you think you are losing consciousness; in this way, and in no other, do you reach anthropological insight. So long as you “have” yourself, have yourself as an object, your experience of man is only as of a thing among things, the wholeness which is to be grasped is not yet “there”; only when you *are*, and nothing else but that, is the wholeness there, and able to be grasped. You perceive only as much as the reality of the “being there” incidentally yields to you; but you do perceive that, and the nucleus of the crystallization develops itself.¹⁰

¹⁰ Buber, *Op. cit.*, pp. 154-6.

VII

To ask "What is sincerity?" is in effect to ask "What is man?" What I like about Buber's "principle of individuation" is that it is conceived as an activity. It is not enough to examine the self, to confess, to narrate a past experience. That is to treat yourself as an object, as a thing among things. You only become aware of the reality of the self when that self is involved in the business of life, with "the unbroken wholeness of events, and especially with the unbroken natural connexion between feelings and actions." This may seem to lead us back to Lawrence's carnal self, even to the "*Sachlichkeit*" of Stirner's "Unique One." But this is not Buber's meaning, for "in the moment of life he has nothing else in his mind but just to live what is to be lived, he is there with his whole being, undivided, and for that very reason there grows in his thought and recollections the knowledge of human wholeness." Wholeness (the achievement of a process of individuation, as described by Buber and Jung) is the concept that must replace the ambiguous notion of sincerity. I do not propose to give any account of the *process* as described by these two great contemporaries, one who liked to call himself an anthropological philosopher, the other who liked to call himself a scientific psychologist; both being above all great humanists. I knew and respected both men: they were the most persistent influences in the latter part of my own life. They were both immensely impressive men—physically so, in that they confronted me as multidimensional "presences." Their learning was immense, but it was not an elaborate facade, all darkness within. They held their great knowledge in luminous suspension, and each in his own way had achieved the knowledge of human wholeness. It was difficult for them to convey this knowledge in an age committed to the superficial media of mass communication, to a world distracted by war and political hysteria. Those who came into direct contact with them were many, but few in terms of the millions of alienated and fragmented inhabitants of our world. There have been other great men in our time, but these two, and the poet to whom I have devoted a separate "memoir" (T. S. Eliot), are the greatest of whom I can speak as in some sort a humble disciple.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

VIII

I seem to burke the final issue—perhaps have done so all my life. Buber believed in a personal relationship with “the spirit of God,” “the image of God,” whom he also called “the Creator.” Man is completed, made whole, by exposure to “the creative Spirit.” Jung was more ambiguous, but when asked whether he believed in God, answered, “I do not believe: I know.” He knew, not so much from his own experience (as in Buber’s case) but from his awareness of the spirit of God in other people, the people who came to him for healing, and whom he could not heal without God’s help.

I cannot bear witness to the presence of God either in Buber’s sense or in Jung’s sense, and yet I am not a materialist. All my life I have found more sustenance in the work of those who bear witness to the reality of a living God than in the work of those who deny God—at least, the witness of the deniers, Stirner, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Shaw, Russell has been out-balanced by the witness of those who affirm God’s existence—George Herbert, Pascal, Traherne, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Hopkins, Simone Weil. In that state of suspense, “waiting on God,” I still live and shall probably die. I have felt no inclination to dramatize this conflict as some “dark night of the soul,” and the resolutions of it that I have expressed in such poems as “The Gold Disc” and “Moon’s Farm” are stoical rather than defiant. Maybe I have not suffered enough, or been sufficiently conscious of the suffering of others, to need the kind of consolation that a saint such as Simone Weil found in God. Behind every “sincere” belief I detect a special kind of experience which has not come to me. Simone’s is particularly moving to me:

In 1938 I spent ten days at Solesmes. . . . There was a young English Catholic there from whom I gained my first idea of the supernatural power of the Sacraments because of the truly angelic radiance with which he seemed to be clothed after going to communion. Chance—for I always prefer saying Chance rather than Providence—made of him a messenger to me. For he told me of the existence of those English poets of the XVIIth century who are named metaphysical. In reading them later on, I discovered the poem of which I read you what is unfortunately a very inadequate translation. It is called *Love*. I learnt it by heart. Often, at the culminat-

ing point of a violent headache, I make myself say it over, concentrating all my attention upon it and clinging with all my soul to the tenderness it enshrines. I used to think I was merely reciting it as a beautiful poem, but without my knowing it the recitation had the virtue of a prayer. It was during one of these recitations that, as I told you, Christ himself came down and took possession of me.¹²

Herbert's poem is well known to me too, though I do not know it by heart; I have read it many times and might read it many more without its having any effect of this kind on me. A long period of preparation had preceded Simone Weil's reading of the poem: she was charged with some mental energy (the violent headaches are significant) which the poem "touched off." It need not necessarily have the same effect on a single other person. To those who have not received it, the grace of God seems to be an arbitrary gift, and I resent the suggestion of the initiates that we who live in outer darkness do so because of our intellectual pride. I am completely humble in my attitude to the mystery of life, and accept gratefully such intuitions as come to me from the writings of the mystics, and from works of art. Simone says that one of the principal truths of Christianity, "a truth which goes almost unrecognized today, is that the looking is what saves us." I look everywhere, but I do not find. Especially have I looked in the realms of poetry and art. Simone says that "the soul's natural in-

¹² From a letter to Father Perrin. *Waiting on God*, tr. Emma Craufurd. London (Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1951, pp. 20-1. To save the reader the trouble of referring to another volume, I give the text of Herbert's poem:

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
 Guiltie of dust and sinne.
 But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
 Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lack'd any thing.
 A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
 Love said; You shall be he.
 I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
 I cannot look on thee.
 Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes, but I?
 Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
 And know you not, sayes Love, who bare the blame?
 My deare, then I will serve.
 You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat,
 So I did sit and eat.

clination to love beauty is the trap God most frequently uses in order to win it and open to it the breath from on high." This may be true, but I have not been caught. I do not believe that the breath comes from "on high," but rather from below. The *Ta Hsüeh* (Great Learning), the Chinese classic that is the repository of the world's most ancient wisdom, says:

The men of old who wished to exemplify illustrious virtue throughout the world, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first had to make an ordered harmony in their own families. Wishing to do this, they first had to cultivate their individual selves. Wishing to do this, they first rectified their minds. Wishing to do this, they first had to seek for absolute sincerity in their thoughts. Wishing for absolute sincerity in their thoughts, they first had to extend their knowledge to the utmost. Such extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things.

That chain of being is absolute and there is no other way of achieving a knowledge of good and evil. But there is no question here of a knowledge of good and evil and I do not believe it is ever possible to separate good and evil in the individual self. Good and evil are in some sense (the anthropological sense) interdependent (as are love and hate) and we remain, in spite of all our endeavours (in spite of even the grace of God) in a permanent state of ambiguity, of openness to experience. That state of openness is the only meaning I can give to sincerity in my thoughts. A final or fixed state of goodness would be lifeless—as mortal as a fixed and final state of evil. I may become aware of the evil part of my thoughts by "the investigation of things" (including the investigation of the behaviour of others), for then I become aware of a lack of harmony in the family and in the state. But at the same time and by the same means I become aware of the good part of my thoughts and of the harmony that can be achieved by the family and the state.

This may seem like a simple pragmatic doctrine to substitute for all the subtleties of Kierkegaard, Buber and Simone Weil. Such as it is, it harmonizes all the thoughts I have ever had on these moral and spiritual problems. I will prevaricate no longer.

HUGH MACDIARMID

Poetry and Science

Science is the Differential Calculus of the mind, Art is the Integral Calculus; they may be beautiful apart, but are great only when combined.

—Sir Ronald Ross

The rarity and value of scientific knowledge
Is little understood—even as people
Who are not botanists find it hard to believe
Special knowledge of the subject can add
Enormously to the aesthetic appreciation of flowers!
Partly because in order to identify a plant
You must study it very much more closely
Than you would otherwise have done, and in the process
Exquisite colours, proportions, and minute changes spring to
light

Too small to be ordinarily noted.
And more than this—it seems the botanist's knowledge
Of the complete structure of the plant
(like a sculptor's of bone and muscle)
—of the configuration of its roots stretching under the earth,
The branching of stems,
Enfolding of buds by bracts,
Spreading of veins on a leaf,
Enriches and makes three-dimensional
One's awareness of its complex beauty.

Wherefore I seek a poetry of facts. Even as
The profound kinship of all living substances
Is made clear by the chemical route.
Without some chemistry one is bound to remain
Forever a dumbfounded savage
In the face of vital reactions.
The beautiful relations
Shown only by biochemistry
Replace a stupefied sense of wonder

Because natural and understandable.
Nature is more wonderful
When it is at least partly understood.
Such an understanding dawns
On the lay reader when he becomes
Acquainted with the biochemistry of the glands
In their relation to diseases such as goitre
And their effects on growth, sex, and reproduction.
He will begin to comprehend a little
The subtlety and beauty of the action
Of enzymes, viruses, and bacteriophages,
These substances which are on the borderland
Between the living and the non-living.

He will understand why the biochemist
Can speculate on the possibility
Of the synthesis of life without feeling
That thereby he is shallow or blasphemous.
He will understand that, on the contrary,
He finds all the more
Because he seeks for the endless.
—'Even our deepest emotions
May be conditioned by traces
Of a derivative of phenantrene!'

JOSEPHINE MILES

Botany

Farthest from town's the rocky shore,
The coastal strand. Beaches of sand
Carried by surf grasses keep the tides.
Dunes built out of sand verbena
And sand crabs run from the waters
As grunion run, as moonlight, sandlight.
The marshes move and take a life.

Monterey aphid and midge darken the sorrel.
Riparian woodlands move into patches of canyon.
Come into cultivation, cropland and pasture;
To the eucalyptus groves of the subdivisions
Barn owl and sparrow hawk;
To Rural Free Delivery and Union Square,
Who only?

Some populations, as of bermuda grass and strawberries,
Are interconnected by vascular systems
Not wholly individual.
By gene exchange the local population
Is the surviving unit, an array
Of individuals each with different tolerances
Of wind or of drought.

Plants on mountains, dwarfed and easy-flowering,
Persist when transferred to quiet gardens.
Lab jar to rain forest, a spatial energy.
Alpine sorrel as it respire through snow
Grows leaves for food, blows fertile seed
Into the summer crevices of slopes, wanes,
Flowers, and breathes again through snow.

Trees choose a spar or hull high in the forest
Who chooses cellophane, charcoal,

Or the seventy flowers of a saffron pond?
Who the alkaloid
Sugar of poppy, purple of atropine, blade of papyrus,
When the terrible case of disease is of life,
To cure it of life?

Paths

Going out into the fields of learning,
We shake the dew from the grasses.
All is new.
The paths we make through the wet grasses shine
As if with light.

They go where we take them, where they go.
Slow wings unfold, scarcely any
Motion happens but our heavy seeking.

Ant labors, hopper leaps away; too early for the bee,
The spider's silk hypotheses unfold
Tenacious, tenable.

WILLIAM E. STAFFORD

At the Desk in the Morning

Voices, while the hand writes, follow it:

“Why aren’t you usefully employed?”

“Are you sure this is worthwhile?”

“Have you done the chores?”

“Are you just motivated by vanity?”

But other voices rejoin:

“A good book is the precious life-blood
of a master spirit.”

“As soon kill a man as a good book. . . .”

And out there in the world are other voices:

Our hedge—“I am your hedge.”

The day—“How deep the day is, and
how always onward.”

Meanwhile only the words themselves,
finding each other and becoming their
own family, are worth the time. If
they discover a pattern of their own—
even if it is only a little explanation like this—

Then something new is accomplished.

Report from the Wind Patrol

They drift our country—flakes—
and learn our story: past
the first cliffs, over the deep
anchored pines that float their
tops air level in the canyon,

checked by the wind patrol,
till the high pass yields, they pass,
then tumble.

What courtesy that air affords,
and hospitality those bustling clouds
recall!—recall that deft entry,
the country all ours to choose,
those miles of pine, the kiss
and nestle of flakes, and the winter they
found, and were.

To touch quickly and then
go on like that may be our way:
the winter we bring, we are.
We lie in miles of snow, still
as a flake, and think designs—
miles out, miles out, and the wind
accepting what comes, day, day,
over the pass, down into our thought,
night.

Sounds

1

Simply, but loud, a sound says,
“If a person happens, and no
sound is there, is there really
a person?” All the sounds laugh.

2

Some sounds are on purpose—
whistle, talk; some are because
the world forgets—wind, water;
and one is the reason for everything
else—breathing.

3

When you think about it, sound will
again be given away to the leaves
sometime, to each rock in the drive.
It will all drain away from us.
Some morning we wake up in the snow.

4

A horn sound plowed through midnight
to deliver its big, soft earprint:
“We made it again, despite all—
all that, everywhere. . . .
We made it again.”

At the Old Farm

The thorns are left, wounding each other.
Vines grow out a window. They won't let
the old place fall. “Please,” the north wall
says, but it has too many friends.
Reassured by storms, rapidly treasured
by constant outdoor air, the roofless
house takes on character.

Eyes or a camera have much to do here—
their full, rich task. The pressure time
put on the boards has brought history
out of the grain. Before the place falls
it acts out the last, farm love; it lives
held by nails that hid and were strong,
parts that yearned this way and that, years-long.

Unannounced, sure, it does that opera we watched
back home, earth ballet, art of the real.

On a Church Lawn

Dandelion cavalry, light little saviors,
baffle the wind, they ride so light.
They surround a church and outside the window
utter their deaf little cry: "If you listen
well, music won't have to happen."

After service they depart singly
to mention in the world their dandelion faith:
"God is not big; He is right."

Readers

We stand apart, each with
an extended hand to learn, we thousands
who reach through books, who show,
even when denying so, our need:
contemporaries, classmates in the world.

Friends, live quiet there, behind
that pane. Be deaf in this roar
our world makes while it works for us.
I stay out here, to record the storm,
how it destroys and celebrates at once—
One life at a time, poem by poem.

HAYDEN CARRUTH

Tabula Rasa

There, an evening star, there again. Above
The torn lovelace of snow, in the far sky
That glows with an afterlight, fading,

The evening star twinkled in a black tangle
Of trees on the ridge. Shall it be our kiss,
Shall we call its sudden singleness,

Its unannounced simplicity, its rage
In the abhorrent distances, its small viridine,
Ours, always ours? Or shall we say

This wintry eloquence is mere affect
Of tattered snow, of tangling black limbs?
Everything reproaches me, everything,

Because we do not stand by Leman's water,
By the onyx columns, entablatures, all
The entablatures, watching the cygnets fade

With Sapphic pathos into a silver night.
Listen, the oboe and the little drum
Make Lulliana where the old whores walk . . .

Do men and women meet, and love forthwith?
Or do they think about it? Or do they
In a masque play fated figures *en tragique*?

Perhaps they are those who only stand
In tattered snow, and dream of fated things.
The limbs have snatched the star, have eaten it.

Another night, we've lost another day. Nothing
Spoke to us, certainly nothing spoke for us—
The slate is clean. Here, therefore, is my kiss.

For R. M., 26th December

To be loved means to be consumed. To love
is to give light with inexhaustible oil—Rilke

Now you are the word *lamp*. Burn
here in the room that has been torn.

Tattered & torn, tattered & torn . . .
Often on recent nights the room

grows soft around us, a nimbus, weird
and reassuring, because I say this word,

love loving beyond love. Who understands?
An offering, hilarious, quick, absurd—

do you, dear girl? Inexhaustibly you consume
my uncreation. I am pure, I have become

the word for you. I write
(at the gray fag end of every night)

myself, who has held in translucent hands
everyone's lost light.

The Wife of Song

Engrossed hands always
doing something.

Burden and
refrain: blackbirds,

import of flight and rest,
gleam and shadow in the sun tree

scattering to a page.
You are a page of sun.

You are a parchment
of old staves and alien dark diamonds

always new in the playing.
Over sun meadow moving,

stopping, returning,
among yellow susans;

or your sun wind dress
flickering at night in the largo

of stove-light.
The fire dies,

you sleep, quiet horn
resonant of sun.

For the Ladies, Some Statements Hammered Out

You morely are for having loved with me.
I know, I know: your old female regret,
the tears and blood so salty, how the sea
rumbles along your pulse and each moonset
withers you in my arms, yet I say, *be*.
I say it and you take it. So you get
what only lovers bestow gratuitously.
How slight you were, how doubtful, when we met!

The world is what we call the goddamned world.
It could be worse. Suppose its course were given
by you, how would you feel?—but it is hurled
by no one round and round the ghastly heaven.
What's valuable is what we give. Then be.
I give you what is valuable to me.

Fifteen Short-Shorts

True, the heart of song
is silence. But how the rests
flee along the staves!

*

Poets crammed like stars in
time's dark tree: coy and winking,
eclipsed by a breeze.

*

Think how dawn must come
to the valleys of the moon:
swift, white, hard, ringing.

*

"An act as simple
as death." I find, for once, a
sort of peace in that.

*

Silver sky. Gold moon.
Dawn on the mountain. White ash
glowing at the heart.

*

For your love given
ask no return, none. To love
you must love to love.

*

Out of the garden,
down the sea wall, I found this
obscure moss-grown stair.

*

Wading in moonlight.
Notice that peculiar swish?
Look, your feet are bones.

*

Moonlight through the trees,
spume in the rigging. Always
something in the wind.

*

All my life that's been
the watchword: Resist! Resist!
—cried deep in the world.

*

You seven seas, you
four winds, sigh, sigh for the child
found today at dawn.

*

Forward! You must. Keep
nothing. Possess not what you
have, but what you had.

*

Steeple bush, hardhack:
the eye's name and then the hand's.
When you speak them, think.

*

Today my poems seem
only the spells I muttered
while waiting for poems.

*

Nacre of twilight,
abbreviate the day. Heart,
your rest is silver.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Notes from the Odyssey

ELPENOR

The first young man ever to be called badly adjusted,
I suppose I was bored. We stayed too long, with the captain
wrapped up in his sweet blonde witch, the mate always cross

and complaining; the girls turning up their noses, and smiling
at the older men who had wives at home. Always it had been
like that: frightened of fighting, glad to be out of

the way: seasick easily, subject to blisters, indifferent
oarsman. Perhaps I'd have been more happy staying as another
pig among pigs? I did what I could. Circe's cellar

was open to all, and up on the roof with my bottle, watching
the stars, it all came out easy and sure, until I stepped
over that damned roof. The black crash of my neck. Nothing

remembered after that except blowing like a thin wind
over the sea: me, myself, but no body, hands or feet, nothing
but a draft, a dreaming direction: came to, to find myself facing

the captain across a ditchful of sheep's blood, telling him
(for once) I must have my grave mound and my oar, my name
and honor. At least, I had been part of that ship's company.

CIRCE

My forest night is padded soft with paws
and lit with yellow eyes. These monsters move
by stress of sightless leashes. So my bears,
my gentle wolves and leopards, whom I love
as a queen loves her slaves, nuzzle my hand,

move dark and silent up and down my stairs.
The night is full of the soft noise of fur,
and here before my doorstep every dawn
the lions open lazy eyes and yawn,
flex heavy paws, and purr.

My brainless dears, each fresh and seasonal maid
of the serving four, who lull my bath and bed,
has had her time of men and being undone
each night, and with each dawn renewed again.
The human beasts are gone. The heavy fauves remain.

It is long since those scarecrows came ashore
in reeking shirts, those frayed and frightened men,
their captain dogged in the events of war
and storm. Some were my beasts awhile, and then
restored, renewed. Dip in the beast, and serve.

A time of nights. Now men and time are gone
back to their sea of sharks and poisonous caves,
the splintered masts and the devouring foam
where, plagued with gods, the Mediterranean raves.
It is enough for Circe to stay home.
The pins of silence tingle in the air.
Look out and see the lions on my lawn
waken and stretch, yawn and benignly glare.
I love my beasts. I love my forest home.

PENELOPE

After my dream had drifted through the horn,
and in my sleep I lost my snowy skein,
I lay unconscious in the shuttered room.

No screams broke through the wall where men were torn.
I came from sleep radiant, as from a bath,
to my own hearth, and saw the man was there,

a strong stranger, my own heart gone to sea
those twenty years, pulled home by time's thin string,
all unfamiliar to be held awhile.

I heard the story of the bleeding room,
the rape of youth, the spirit like an owl
haunting the fight with rumor and gray wings.

Cherish my heart recaptured. It must surge
to love again, sweet unity, but how
shall I forget these things which have been done:

my faithless weeping maids with bucket and sponge
mopping the mess, then hanged all in a line,
my suitors stacked like cordwood by the wall?

I sent my suitors chits and promises.
I fed my tame geese milk and grains of corn:
my snowy geese, who now lie wrecked and maimed.

ODYSSEUS

Happy is he who like Ulysses has returned,
and seen his housework done, the dead guests shoveled out
of the dining room into the street and burned,
the pretty maids all in a row strung on the line
like wash, and now, with the day clean, can look about
and say: I have come home. All this is mine.

The heavens and the hells I sailed between,
all the long days, are stored inside my skull.
They storm and stammer. Men's heads bob like crows
along the water, the girl-goddess throws
her sheet on a dead face. All is too full
of death. The bone-house too must be swept clean.

So, when I have planted my oar, I shall
not sail again. The gulfs are here, and all
enough to drink me down. I want no sea.
I have lived out the whole shape of mankind;
nothing of man but has been found in me,
and nothing left but live with my own mind.

Here is my wife (what is she like?), my son,
to comfort me for having all I prayed
to have. I wash the ghosts out of my head,
those moths, my moments; the girl-memories,
the tides, the teeth, the dreams are all undone.
Now I shall wash my hands and go to bed.

W. S. MERWIN

The Piper

It is twenty years
since I first looked for words
for me now
whose wisdom or something would stay me
I chose to
trouble myself about the onset
of this
it was remote it was grievous
it is true I was still a child

I was older then
than I hope ever to be again
that summer sweating in the attic
in the foreign country
high above the piper but hearing him
once

and never moving from my book
and the narrow
house full of pregnant women
floor above floor
waiting
in that city
where the sun was the one bell

It has taken me till now
to be able to say
even this
it has taken me this long
to know what I cannot say
where it begins
like the names of the hungry
Beginning
I am here
please
be ready to teach me
I am almost ready to learn

The Lake

Did you exist
ever

our clouds separated while it was still dark
then I could not sleep the sleep of a child
I got up to look for you
bringing my silence
all of it

no father in the house at least

I got my boat
that we had saved for each other
a white creature my

wise elder
You rustled as it slid
from shore

I lay there
looking down while the mist was torn
looking down
where
was the Indian village
said to be drowned there

one glimpse and I would have hung
fixed in its sky
when the dawn was gone
and the morning star
and the wind
and the sun
and the calling around you

The Church

High walls
pale brick like Babylon
above the cliff face
the house
of the Lord

at the single window
up in the back
toward the river
the eyes I left
as a child there

everything gone now
the walls are down
the altar
only I am still standing

on the weedy rock in the wind
there is no building here

there are my hands
that have known between them
the bride
and call to her
wherever she is not wherever
she is *Hand*

hand

Translations from Sergei Essenin

In collaboration with OLGA CARLISLE

I am the last poet of the villages
the plank bridge lifts a plain song
I stand at a farewell service
birches swinging leaves like censers

The golden flame will burn down
in the candle of waxen flesh
and the moon a wooden clock
will caw caw my midnight

On the track in the blue field
soon the iron guest will appear
his black hand will seize
oats that the dawn sowed

In a lifeless and alien grip
my poems will die too
only nodding oats
will mourn for their old master

The wind will take up their neighing
they will all dance in the morning
soon the moon a wooden clock
will caw caw my midnight

*

Wind whistles through the steep fence
hides in the grass
a drunk and a thief
I'll end my days
the light sinking in red hills
shows me the path
I'm not the only one on it
not the only one
plowed Russia stretches away
grass and then snow
no matter what part I'd come from
our cross is the same
I believe in my secret hour
as in ikons not painted by hands
like a tramp who sleeps back of a fence
it will rise my inviolate savior
but through the blue tattered fogs
of unconfessed rivers
I may pass with a drunken smile
never knowing him
no tear lighting up on my lashes
to break my dream
joy like a blue dove
dropping into the dark
sadness resuming
its vindictive song
but may the wind on my grave
dance like a peasant in spring.

*

It's done. I've left the home fields.
There'll be no going back.
The green wings all over the poplars
will never ring again.

Without me the hunched house sinks lower.
My old dog died long ago.
I know God means I'm to die
among the bent streets of Moscow.

I like the city, in its old script,
though it's grown fat with age.
The gold somnolence of Asia
dozes on the cupolas.

But at night when the moon shines, shines,
shines, the devil knows how,
I take a side street, head down,
into the same tavern.

A lair full of din and roaring,
but all night till daylight
I read out poems to whores
and drink with cut-throats.

My heart beats faster and faster,
I pick the wrong moments
to say, "I'm like you, I'm lost,
I can never go back."

Without me the hunched house sinks lower.
My old dog died long ago.
I know God means I'm to die
among the bent streets of Moscow.

JAMES MERRILL

To My Greek

Dear nut
Uncrackable by nuance or debate,
Eat with your fingers, wear your bloomers to bed,
Under my skin stay nude. Let past and future
Perish upon our lips, ocean inherit
Those paper millions. Let there be no word
For justice, grief, convention; *you* be convention—
Goods, bads, kaló-kakó, cockatoo-raucous
Coastline of white printless coves
Already strewn with offbeat echolalia.
Forbidden Salt Kiss Wardrobe Foot Cloud Peach
—Name, it, my chin drips sugar. Radiant dumbbell, each
Noon's menus and smalltalk leave you
Likelier, each sunset yawned away,
Hair in eyes, head bent above the strummed
Lexicon, gets by heart about to fail
This or that novel mode of being together
Without conjunctions. Still
I fear for us. Nights fall
We toss through blindly, drenched in her appraising
Glare, the sibyl I turn to
When all else fails me, when you do.
The mother tongue!
Her least slip a mirror triptych glosses,
Her automation and my mind are one.
Ancient in fishscale silver-blue,
What can she make of you? Her cocktail sweats

With reason: speech will rise from it,
Quite beyond your comprehension rise
Like blood to a slapped face, stingingly apt
If unrepeatable, tones one forgets
Even as one is changed for life by them,
Veins branching a cold coral,
Common sense veering into common scenes,
Tears, incoherent artifice,
Altar upset, cut glass and opaline
Schools ricocheting through the loud cave
Where lie my Latin's rusted treasure,
The bones, picked clean, of my Italian,
Where some blue morning also she may damn
Well find her windpipe slit with that same rainbow
Edge a mere weekend with you gives
To books, to living (anything to forego
That final drunken prophecy whereby,
Lacking her blessing, you my siren grow
Stout, serviceable, gray,
A fishwife shawled in fourth-hand idiom
Spouting my views to earth and heaven)—Oh,
Having chosen the way of little knowledge,
Trusted each to use the other
Kindly except in moments of gross need,
Come put the verb-wheel down
And kiss my mouth despite the foot in it.
Let schoolboys brave her shallows. Sheer
Lilting azure float them well above
Those depths the surfacer
Lives, when he does, alone to sound and sound.
The barest word be what I say in you.

ANNE SEXTON

The Interrogation of the Man of Many Hearts

*Who's she,
that one in your arms?*

She's the one I carried my bones to
and built a house that was just a cot
and built a life that was over an hour
and built a castle where no one lives
and built, in the end, a song
to go with the ceremony.

*Why have you brought her here?
Why do you knock on my door
with your little stories and songs?*

I had joined her the way a man joins
a woman and yet there was no place
for festivities or formalities
and these things matter to a woman
and, you see, we live in a cold climate
and are not permitted to kiss on the street
so I made up a song that wasn't true.
I made up a song called *Marriage*.

*You come to me out of wedlock
and kick your foot on my stoop
and ask me to measure such things?*

Never. Never. Not my real wife.
She's my real witch, my fork, my mare,
my mother of tears, my skirtful of hell,
the stamp of my sorrows, the stamp of my bruises
and also the children she might bear

and also a private place, a body of bones
that I would honestly buy, if I could buy,
that I would marry, if I could marry.

*And should I torment you for that?
Each man has a small fate allotted to him
and yours is a passionate one.*

But I am in torment. We have no place.
The cot we share is almost a prison
where I can't say buttercup, bobolink,
sugarduck, pumpkin, love ribbon, locket,
valentine, summergirl, funnygirl and all
those nonsense things one says in bed.
To say I have bedded with her is not enough.
I have not only bedded her down.
I have tied her down with a knot.

*Then why do you stick your fists
into your pockets? Why do you shuffle
your feet like a schoolboy?*

For years I have tied this knot in my dreams.
I have walked through a door in my dreams
and she was standing there in my mother's apron.
Once she crawled through a window that was shaped
like a keyhole and she was wearing my daughter's
pink corduroys and each time I tied these women
in a knot. Once a Queen came. I tied her too.
But this is something I have actually tied
and now I have made her fast.
I sang her out. I caught her down.
I stamped her out with a song.
There was no other apartment for it.
There was no other chamber for it.
Only the knot. The bedded down knot.
Thus I have laid my hands upon her
and have called her eyes and her mouth
as mine, and also her tongue.

*Why do you ask me to make choices?
I am not a judge or a psychologist.
You own your bedded down knot.*

And yet I have real daytimes and nighttimes
with children and balconies and a good wife.
Thus I have tied these other knots,
yet I would rather not think of them
when I speak to you of her. Not now.
If she were a room to rent I would pay.
If she were a life to save I would save.
Maybe I am a man of many hearts.

*A man of many hearts?
When then do you tremble at my doorway?
A man of many hearts does not need me.*

I'm caught deep in the dye of her.
I have allowed you to catch me red handed,
catch me with my wild oats in a wild clock
for my mare, my dove and my own clean body.
People might say I have snakes in my boots
but I tell you that just once am I in the stirrups,
just once, this once, in the cup.
The love of the woman is in the song.
I called her the woman in red.
I called her the girl in pink
but she was ten colors
and ten women.
I could hardly name her.

*I know who she is.
You have named her enough.*

Maybe I shouldn't have put it in words.
Frankly, I think I'm worse for this kissing,
drunk as a piper, kicking the traces
and determined to tie her up forever.
You see the song is the life,
the life I can't live.

God, even as He passes,
hands down monogamy like slang.
I wanted to write her into the law.
But, you know, there is now law for this.

*Man of many hearts, you are a fool!
The clover has grown thorns this year
and robbed the cattle of their fruit
and the stones of the river
have sucked men's eyes dry,
season after season
and every bed has been condemned,
not by morality or law,
but by time.*

The Break

It was also my violent heart that broke,
falling down the front hall stairs.
It was also a message I never spoke,
calling, riser after riser, *who cares*

about you, who cares, splintering up
the hip that was merely made of crystal,
the post of it and also the cup.
I exploded in the hallway like a pistol.

So I fell apart. So I came all undone.
Yes. I was like a box of dog bones.
But now they've wrapped me in like a nun.
Burst like firecrackers! Held like stones!

What a feat sailing queerly like Icarus
until the tempest undid me and I broke!
The ambulance drivers made such a fuss.
But when I cried, "Wait for my courage!" they smoked

and then they placed me, tied me up on their plate,
and wheeled me out to their coffin, my nest.
Slowly the siren, slowly the hearse, sedate
as a dowager. At the E.W. they cut off my dress.

I cried, "Oh Jesus, help me! Oh Jesus Christ!"
and the nurse replied, "Wrong name. My name
is Barbara," and hung me in an odd device,
a buck's extension and a balkan overhead frame.

The orthopedic man declared,
"You'll be down for a year." His scoop. His news.
He opened the skin. He scraped. He pared
and drilled through bone for his four inch screws.

That takes brute strength like pushing a cow
up hill. I tell you, it takes skill
and bedside charm and all that know how.
The body is a damn hard thing to kill.

But please don't touch or jiggle my bed.
I'm Ethan Frome's wife. I'll move when I'm able.
The t.v. hangs from the wall like a moose head.
I hide a pint of bourbon in my bedside table.

A bird full of bones, now I'm held by a sand bag.
The fracture was twice. The fracture was double.
The days are horizontal. The days are a drag.
All of the skeleton in me is in trouble.

Across the hall is the bedpan station.
The urine and stools pass hourly by my head
in silver bowls. They flush in unison
in the autoclave. My one dozen roses are dead.

They have ceased to menstruate. They hang
there like little dried up blood clots.
And the heart too, that cripple, how it sang
once. How it thought it could call the shots.

Understand what happened the day that I fell.
My heart had stammered and hungered at
a marriage feast until the angel of hell
turned me into the punisher, the acrobat.

My bones are loose as clothes pins,
as abandoned as dolls in a toy shop
and my heart, old hunger motor, with its sins
revved up like an engine that would not stop.

And now I spend all day taking care
of my body, that baby. Its cargo is scarred.
I anoint the bedpan. I brush my hair,
waiting in the pain machine for my bones to get hard,

for the soft, soft bones that were laid apart
and were screwed together. They will knit.
And the other corpse, the fractured heart,
I feed it piecemeal, little chalice. I'm good to it.

Yet like a fire alarm it waits to be known.
It is wired. In it many colors are stored.
While my body's in prison, heart cells alone
have multiplied. My bones are merely bored

with all this waiting around. But the heart,
this child of myself that resides in the flesh,
this ultimate signature of the me, the start
of my blindness and sleep, builds a death crèche.

The figures are placed at the grave of my bones.
All figures knowing it is the other death
they came for. Each figure standing alone.
The heart burst with love and lost its breath.

This little town, this little country is real
and thus it is so of the post and the cup
and thus of the violent heart. The zeal
of my house doth eat me up.

The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator

The end of the affair is always death.
She's my workshop. Slippery eye,
out of the tribe of myself my breath
finds you gone. I horrify
those who stand by. I am fed.
At night, alone, I marry the bed.

Finger to finger, now she's mine.
She's not too far. She's my encounter.
I beat her like a bell. I recline
in the bower where you used to mount her.
You borrowed me on the flowered spread.
At night, alone, I marry the bed.

Take for instance this night, my love,
that every single couple puts together
with a joint overturning, beneath, above,
the abundant two on sponge and feather,
kneeling and pushing, head to head.
At night, alone, I marry the bed.

I break out of my body this way,
an annoying miracle. Could I
put the dream market on display?
I am spread out. I crucify.
My little plum is what you said.
At night, alone, I marry the bed.

Then my black-eyed rival came.
The lady of water, rising on the beach,
a piano at her fingertips, shame
on her lips and a flute's speech.
And I was the knock-kneed broom instead.
At night, alone, I marry the bed.

She took you the way a woman takes
a bargain dress off the rack
and I broke the way a stone breaks.
I give back your books and fishing tack.
Today's paper says that you are wed.
At night, alone, I marry the bed.

The boys and girls are one tonight.
They unbutton blouses. They unzip flies.
They take off shoes. They turn off the light.
The glimmering creatures are full of lies.
They are eating each other. They are overfed.
At night, alone, I marry the bed.

A. R. AMMONS

Guitar Recitativos

1

I know you love me, baby
I know it by the way you carry on around here certain times
of the day and night
I can make the distinction between the willing and the
unrefusable
That's not what I'm talking about
That's not what I need
What I mean is could you just peel me a few of those grapes
over there
I want to lie here cool and accumulate
Oh say about half a bunch
That's what I need—flick out those little seed—
Just drop them in here one at a time
I'm not going anyplace, baby, not today
Relax—sneak the skin off a few of those grapes for me, will you?

2

Baby, you been stomping round on my toes so long
they breaking out in black and blue hyacinths,
well-knit forget-me-nots
Geraniums are flopping out over the tops of my shoes
tendrils coming out along the edges of my shoelaces

Gladioli are steering out of the small of my back
strumming those cool stalks up my spine
Zinnias radiating from the crook of my neck
and petunias swinging down bells from my earlobes
All this stomping around on me you been doing, baby,
I'm gonna break out in a colorful reaction
I'm gonna wade right through you
with the thorns of all these big red roses

3

I'm tired of the you-and-me thing
I am for more research into the nature of the amorous bond
the discovery of catalysts for speeding-up, wearing out,
and getting it over with
or for slowing it down to allow long intervals of looseness

Baby, there are times when the mixture becomes immiscible
and other times we get so stirred up I can't tell
whether I'm you or me
and then I have this fear of a surprising reaction in which
we both turn into something else

powdery or gaseous or slightly metallic
What I mean is this whole relationship is, lacking further
knowledge, risky: while there's still time, why
don't you get yourself together and I'll

get myself together and then we'll sort of shy out
of each other's gravitational field, unstring the
electromagnetism, and then sort of just drop this
whole orientation, baby

4

I can tell you what I think of your beauty, baby,
you have it, it's keen and fast, there's this
glittery sword whipping about your head all day
and, baby, you make people snap—you condescend

and a surprised little heart splatters or you turn your
cold head away and a tiny freeze kills a few
cells in some man's brain—I mean, baby, you
may be kind but your beauty, sweetie, is such

many a man would run himself through for
hating your guts every minute that he died for you

5

You come in and I turn on:
freon purrs and the
refrigerator breaks out with hives of ice:
the Westinghouse portable electric fan flushes
my papers all over the room:
the waffle-iron whacks down sizzling imaginary waffles:
one paper glues itself and billows to the back of the fan,
my nerves nervous as newspapers.

I tell you, you are a walking calamity
And when you sit down there is hardly less activity:
the alarm clock breaks out raging its held cry
and the oven in the kitchen sets itself for broil:
I mean the gas-jet in the incinerator bleeps on
and, frankly, the mechanisms in my legs—I hope you
never find out—jerk:
Oh, beauty, beauty is so disturbingly nice.

ANTHONY BURGESS

The Muse

A sort of SF story

“YOU’RE QUITE SURE,” ASKED SWENSON for the hundredth time, “you want to go through with this?” His hands ranged over the five manuals of the instrument console and, in cross-rhythm, his feet danced on the pedals. He was a very old man, waxed over with the veneer of rejuvenation chemicals. Very wise, with a century of experience behind him, he yet looked much of an age with Paley, the twenty-five-year-old literary historian by his side. Paley grinned with undiminished patience and said:

“I want to go through with it.”

“It won’t be quite what you think,” said Swenson. (This too he had said many times before.) “It can’t be absolutely identical. You may get shocks where you least expect them. I remember taking Wheeler that time, you know. Poor devil, he thought it was going to be the fourteenth century he knew from his books. But it was a very different fourteenth century. Thatched cottages and churches and manors and so on, and lovely cathedrals. But there were polycephalic monsters running the feudal system, with tentacles too. Speaking the most exquisite Norman French, he said.”

“How long was he there?”

“He was sending signals through within three days. But he had to wait a year, poor devil, before we could get him out. He was in a dungeon, you know. They got suspicious of his Middle English or something. White-haired and gibbering when we got him aboard. His jailers had been a sort of tripodic ectoplasm.”

“That wasn’t in System B303, though, was it?”

“Obviously not.” The old man came out in Swenson’s snap-pishness. “It was a couple of years ago. A couple of years ago System B303 was enjoying the doubtful benefits of proto-Elizabethan rule. As it still is.”

“Sorry. Stupid of me.”

“Some of you young men,” said Swenson, going over to the bank of monitor screens, “expect too much of Time. You expect

historical Time to be as plastic as the other kinds. Because the microchronic and macrochronic flows can be played with, you consider we ought to be able to do the same thing with—”

“Sorry, sorry, *sorry*. I just wasn’t thinking.” With so much else on his mind, was it surprising that he should be temporarily un-gearred to the dull realities of clockwork time, solar time?

“That’s the trouble with you young—Ah,” said Swenson with satisfaction, “that was a beautiful changeover.” With the smoothness of the tongue gliding from one phonemic area to another, the temporal path had become a spatial one. The uncountable megamiles between Earth and System B303 had been no more to their ship than, say, a two-way transatlantic flipover. And now, in reach of this other Earth—so dizzyingly far away that it was the same as their own, though at an earlier stage of their own Earth’s history—the substance vedmum had slid them, as from one dream to another, into a world where solid objects might subsist, so alien as to be familiar, fulfilling the bow-bent laws of the cosmos. Swenson, who had been brought up on the interchangeability of time and space, could yet never cease to marvel at the miracle of the almost yawning causalness with which the *Nacheinander* turned into the *Nebeneinander* (there was no doubt, the old German words caught it best!) . So far the monitor screens showed nothing, but tape began to whirl out from the crystalline corignon machine in the dead centre of the control-turret—cold and accurate information about the solar system they were now entering. Swenson read it off, nodding, a Nordic spruce of a man glimmering with chemical youth. Paley looked at him, leaning against the bulkhead, envying the tallness, the knotty strength. But, he thought, Swenson could never disguise himself as an inhabitant of a less well-nourished era. He, Paley, small and dark as those far-distant Silurians of the dawn of Britain, could creep into the proto-Elizabethan England they would soon be approaching and never be noticed as an alien.

“Amazing how insignificant the variants are,” said Swenson. “How finite the cosmos is, how shamefully incapable of formal renewals—”

“Oh, come,” smiled Paley.

“When you consider what the old musicians could do with a mere twelve notes—”

"The human mind," said Paley, "can travel in a straight line. The cosmos is curved."

Swenson turned away from the billowing mounds of tape, saw that the five-manual console was flicking lights smoothly and happily, then went over to an instrument panel whose levers called for muscle, for the blacksmith rather than the organist. "Star-board," he said. "15.8. Now we play with gravities." He pulled hard. The monitor screens showed band after band of light, moving steadily upwards. "This, I think, should be—" He twirled a couple of corrective dials on a shoulder-high panel above the levers. "Now," he said. "Free fall."

"So," said Paley, "we're being pulled by—"

"Exactly." And then, "You're quite sure you want to go through with this?"

"You know as well as I do," smiled Paley patiently, "that I *have* to go through with it. For the sake of scholarship. For the sake of my reputation."

"Reputation," snorted Swenson. Then, looking towards the monitors, he said, "Ah. Something coming through."

Mist, swirling cloud, a solid shape peeping intermittently out of vapour porridge. Paley came over to look. "It's the earth," he said in wonder.

"It's *their* earth."

"The same as ours. America, Africa—"

"The configuration's slightly different, see, down there at the southern tip of—"

"I can't see any difference."

"Madagascar's a good deal smaller."

"The cloud's come over again." Paley looked and looked. It was unbelievable.

"Think," said Swenson kindly, "how many absolutely incomputable systems there have to be before you can see the pattern of creation starting all over again. This seems wonderful to you because you just can't conceive how many myriads upon myriads of other worlds are *not* like our own."

"And the stars," said Paley, a thought striking him; "I mean, the stars they can actually see from there, from their London, say—are they the same stars as ours?"

Swenson shrugged at that. "Roughly," he said. "There's a rough

kinship. But," he explained, "we don't properly know yet. Yours is only the tenth or eleventh trip, remember. What is it, when all's said and done, but the past? Why go to the past when you can to the future?" His nostrils widened with complacency. "Gg," he said. "I've done that trip a few times. It's pleasant to know one can look forward to another twenty years of life. I saw it there, quite clearly, a little plaque in Rostron Place: *To the memory of G. F. Swenson, 1963-2084.*"

"We have to check up on history," said Paley, mumbling a little. His own quest seemed piddling: all this machinery, all this expertise in the service of a rather mean enquiry. "I have to know whether William Shakespeare really wrote those plays."

Swenson, as Paley expected, snorted. "A nice sort of thing to want to find out," he said. "He's been dead just five hundred years this year, and you want to prove that there's nothing to celebrate. Not," he added, "that that sort of thing's much in my line. I've never had much time for poetry. Aaaaah." He interposed his own head between Paley's and the screen, peering. The pages of the atlas had been turned; now Europe alone swam towards them. "Now," said Swenson, "I must set the exactest course of all." He worked at dials, frowning but humming happily, then beetled at Paley, saying: "Oughtn't you to be getting ready?"

Paley blushed that, with a huge swathe of the cosmos spent in near-idleness, he should have to rush things as they approached their port. He took off his single boiler-suit of a garment and drew from the locker his Elizabethan fancy-dress. Shirt, trunks, cod-piece, doublet, feathered French hat, slashed shoes—clothes of synthetic cloth that was an exact simulacrum of old-time weaving, the shoes of good leather hand-made. And then there was the scrip with its false bottom; hidden therein was a tiny two-way signaller. Not that, if he got into difficulties, it would be of much use: Swenson was (and these were strict orders) to come back for him in a year's time. The signaller was to show where he was and that he was still there, a guest of the past, really a stowaway. Swenson had to move on yet further into space; Professor Shimmins to be picked up in FH78, Dr. Guan Moh Chan in G210, Paley collected on the way back. Paley tested the signaller, then checked the open and honest contents of his scrip: chief among these was a collection of the works of William Shakespeare—not

the early works, though: only six of the works which, in this B303 year of A.D. 1595, had not yet been written. The plays had been copied from a facsimile of the First Folio in fairly accurate Elizabethan script; the paper too was a goodish imitation of the tough coarse stuff that Elizabethan dramatists wrote on. For the rest, Paley had powdered prophylactics in little bags and, most important of all, gold—angels fire-new, the odd portague, dollars.

"Well," said Swenson, with the faintest twinge of excitement, "England, here we come." Paley looked down on familiar river-shapes—Tees, Humber, Thames. He gulped, running through his drill swiftly. "Count-down starts now," said Swenson. A synthetic voice in the port bulkhead began ticking off cold seconds from 300. "I'd better say good-bye then," gulped Paley, opening the trap in the deck which led to the tiny jet-powered very-much-one-man aircraft. "You should come down in the Thames estuary," said Swenson. "*Au revoir*, not good-bye. I hope you prove whatever it is you want to prove." 200—199—198. Paley went down, settled himself in the seat, checked the simple controls. Waiting took, it seemed, an age. He smiled wryly, seeing himself, an Elizabethan, with his hands on the wheel of a twenty-first-century miniature jet aircraft. 60—59—58. He checked his Elizabethan vowels. He went over his fictitious provenance: a young man from Norwich with stage ambitions ("See, here have I writ a play and a goodly one"). The synthetic voice, booming here in the small cabin, counted to its limit. 4—3—2—1.

Zero. Paley zeroed out of the belly of the mother-ship, suddenly calm, then elated. It was moonlight, the green countryside slept. The river was a glory of silver. His course had been pre-set by Swenson; the control available to him was limited, but he came down smoothly on the water. What he had to do now was to ease himself to the shore. The little motor purred gently as he steered in moonlight. The river was broad here, so that he seemed to be in a world all water and sky. The shore neared—it was all trees, sedge, thicket; there was no sign of habitation, not even of another craft. What would another craft have thought, sighting him? He had no fears about that: with its wings folded, the little air-boat looked, from a distance, like some nondescript barge, so well had it been camouflaged. And now, to be safe, he had to hide it, cover it with greenery in the sedge. But, first, before disembarking, he must set the time-switch that would, when he was safe ashore,

render the metal of the fuselage high-charged, lethally repellent of all would-be boarders. It was a pity, but there it was. It would automatically switch off in a year's time, in twelve months to a day. In the meantime, what myths, what madness would the curious examiner, the chance finder generate, tales uncredited by sophisticated London?

And now, London, here he came.

*

Paley, launched on his night's walk up-river, found the going easy enough. The moon lighted field-paths, stiles. Here and there a small farmhouse slept. Once he thought he heard a distant whistled tune. Once he thought he heard a town clock strike. He had no idea of the month or day or time of night, but he guessed that it was late spring and some three hours or so off dawn. The year 1595 was certain, according to Swenson. Time functioned here as on true Earth, and two years before Swenson had taken a man to Muscovy, where they computed according to the Christian system, and the year had been 1593. Paley, walking, found the air gave good rich breathing, but from time to time he was made uneasy by the unfamiliar configurations of the stars. There was Cassiopoeia's Chair, Shakespeare's first name's drunken initial, but there were constellations he had not seen before. Could the stars, as the Elizabethans themselves believed, modify history? Could this Elizabethan London, because it looked up at stars unknown on true Earth, be identical with that other one that was only now known from books? Well, he would soon know.

London did not burst upon him, a monster of grey stone. It came upon him gradually and gently, houses set in fields and amid trees, the cool suburbs of the wealthy. And then, like a muffled trumpet under the sinking moon, the Tower. And then came the crammed houses, all sleeping. Paley breathed in the smell of this summer London, and he did not like what he smelled. It was a complex of old rags and fat and dirt, but it was also a smell he knew from the time he had flipped over to Borneo and timidly penetrated the periphery of the jungle: it was, somehow, a jungle smell. And, as if to corroborate this, a howl arose in the distance, but it was a dog's howl. Dogs, man's best friend,

here in outer space; dog howling to dog across the inconceivable vastness of the cosmos. And then came a human voice and the sound of boots on the cobbles. "Four of the clock and a fine morning." He instinctively flattened himself in an alleyway, crucified against the dampish wall. The time for his disclosure was not quite yet. He tasted the vowel-sounds of the bellman's call—nearer to American than to present-day British English. "Fowrrr 'vth' cluck." And then, at last knowing the time and automatically feeling for a stopped wristwatch that was not there, he wondered what he should do till day started. Here were no hotels with clerks on all-night duty. He tugged at his dark beard (a three months' growth) and then decided that, as the sooner he started on his scholar's quest the better, he would walk to Shoreditch where the Theatre was. Outside the City's boundaries, where the play-hating City Council could not reach, it was, history said, a new and handsome structure. A scholar's zest, the itch to see, came over him and made him forget the cool morning wind that was rising. His knowledge of the London of his own century gave him little help by way of street-orientation. He walked north—the Minories, Houndsditch, Bishopsgate—and, as he walked, he retched once or twice involuntarily at the stench from the kennel. There was a bigger, richer, filthier, obscener smell beyond this, and this he thought must come from Fleet Ditch. He dug into his scrip and produced a pinch of powder; this he placed on his tongue to quieten his stomach.

Not a mouse stirring as he walked, and there, under rolling cloud all besilvered, he saw it, he saw it, the Theatre, with something like disappointment. It was mean wood rising above wooden paling, its roof shaggily thatched. Things were always smaller than one expected, always more ordinary. He wondered if it might be possible to go in. There seemed to be no night-watchman protecting it. Before approaching the entrance (a door for an outside privy rather than a gate to the temple of the Muses) he took in the whole moonlit scene, the mean houses, the cobbles, the astonishing and unexpected greenery all about. And then he saw his first living animals.

Not a mouse stirring, had he thought? But those creatures with long tails were surely rats, a trio of them nibbling at some tump of rubbish not far from the way in to the Theatre. He went warily

nearer, and the rats at once scampered off, each filament of whisker clear in the light. They were rats as he knew rats—though he had only seen them in the laboratories of his university—with mean bright eyes and thick meaty tails. But then he saw what they had been eating.

Dragged out from the mound of trash was a human forearm. In some ways Paley was not unprepared for this. He had soaked in images of traitor heads stuck on Temple Bar, bodies washed by three tides and left to rot on Thames shore, limbs hacked off at Tyburn (Marble Arch in his day) and carelessly left for the scavengers. (Kites, of course, kites. Now the kites would all be roosting.) Clinically, his stomach calm from the medicine he had taken, he examined the gnawed raw thing. There was not much flesh off it yet: the feast had been interrupted at its beginning. On the wrist, though, was a torn and pulpy patch which made Paley frown—something anatomically familiar but, surely, not referable to a normal human arm. It occurred to him for just a second that this was rather like an eye-socket, the eye wrenched out but the soft bed left, still not completely ravaged. And then he smiled that away, though it was difficult to smile.

He turned his back on the poor human relic and made straight for the entrance-door. To his surprise it was not locked. It creaked as he opened it, a sort of voice of welcome to this world of 1595 and its strange familiarity. There it was—tamped earth for the groundlings to tamp down yet further; the side-boxes; the jutting apron-stage; the study uncurtained; the tarrass; the tower with its flagstaff. He breathed deeply, reverently. This was the Theatre. And then—

“Arrr, caught ye at it!” Paley’s heart seemed about to leap from his mouth like a badly fitting denture. He turned to meet his first Elizabethan. Thank God, he looked normal enough, though filthy. He was in clumsy boots, goose-turd-coloured hose, and a rancid jerkin. He tottered a little as though drunk, and, as he came closer to peer into Paley’s face, Paley caught a frightful blast of ale-breath. The man’s eyes were glazed and he sniffed deeply and long at Paley as though trying to place him by scent. Intoxicated, unfocussed, thought Paley with contempt, and as for having the nerve to sniff. . . . Paley spoke up, watching his vowels with care:

"I am a gentleman from Norwich, but newly arrived. Stand some way off, fellow. Know you not your betters when you see them?"

"I know not thee, nor why tha should be here at dead of night." But he stood away. Paley glowed with small triumph, the triumph of one who has, say, spoken home-learnt Russian for the first time in Moscow and has found himself perfectly understood. He said:

"Thee? *Thee*? I will not be thee-and-thou'd so, fellow. I would speak with Master Burbage."

"Which Master Burbage, the young or the old?"

"Either. I have writ plays and fain would show them."

The watchman, as he must evidently be, sniffed at Paley again. "Gentleman you may be, but you smell not like a Christian. Nor do you keep Christian hours."

"As I say, I am but newly arrived."

"I see not your horse. Nor your traveller's cloak."

"They are—I have left them at mine inn."

The watchman muttered. "And yet you say you are but newly arrived. Go to." Then he chuckled and, at the same time, delicately advanced his right hand towards Paley as though about to bless him. "I know what 'tis," he said, chuckling. "'Tis some naughty meeting, th'hast trysted ringading with some wench, nay, some wife rather, nor has she belled out the morn." Paley could make little of this. "Come," said the man, "chill make for 'ee an th' hast the needful." Paley looked blank. "An tha wants bedding," the man said more loudly. Paley caught that, he caught also the significance of the open palm and wiggling fingers. Gold. He felt in his scrip and produced an angel. The man's jaw dropped as he took it. "Sir," he said, hat-touching.

"Truth to tell," said Paley, "I am shut out of mine inn, late-returning from a visit and not able to make mine host hear with e'en the loudest knocking."

"Arrrrr," and the watchman put his finger by his nose, a homely Earthly gesture, then scratched his cheek with the angel, finally, before stowing it in a little purse on his girdle, passing it a few times in front of his chest. "With me, sir, come."

He waddled speedily out, Paley following him with fast-beating pulse. "Where go we, then?" he asked. He received no answer. The moon was almost down and there were the first intimations

of summer dawn. Paley shivered in the wind; he wished he had brought a cloak with him instead of the mere intention of buying one here. If it was really a bed he was being taken to, he was glad. An hour or so's sleep in the warmth of blankets and never mind whether or not there would be fleas. On the streets nobody was astir, though Paley thought he heard a distant cat's concert—a painful courtship and even more painful copulation to follow, just as on real Earth. Paley followed the watchman down a narrow lane off Bishopsgate, dark and stinking. The effects of the medicine had worn off; he felt his gorge rise as before. But the stink, his nose noticed, was subtly different from before: it was, he thought in a kind of small madness, somehow swirling, redistributing its elements as though capable of autonomous action. He didn't like this one little bit. Looking up at the paling stars he felt sure that they too had done a sly job of refiguration, forming fresh constellations like a sand tray on top of a thumped piano.

"Here 'tis," said the watchman, arriving at a door and knocking without further ado. "Croshabels," he winked. But the eyelid winked on nothing but glazed emptiness. He knocked again, and Paley said:

"'Tis no matter. It is late, or early, to drag folk from their beds." A young cock crowed near, brokenly, a prentice cock.

"Neither one nor t'other. 'Tis in the way of a body's trade, aye." Before he could knock again, the door opened. A cross and sleepy-looking woman appeared. She wore a filthy nightgown and, from its bosom, what seemed like an arum lily peered out. She thrust it back in irritably. She was an old Elizabethan woman, about thirty-eight, grey-haired. She cried:

"Ah?"

"One for one. A gentleman, he saith." He took his angel from his purse and held it up. She raised a candle the better to see. The arum lily peeped out again. All smiles, she curtsied Paley in. Paley said:

"'Tis but a matter of a bed, madam." The other two laughed at that "madam." "A long and wearisome journey from Norwich," he added. She gave a deeper curtsy, more mocking than before, and said, in a sort of croak:

"A bed it shall be and no pallet nor the floor neither. For the gentleman from Norwich where the cows eat porridge." The

watchman grinned. He was blind, Paley was sure he was blind; on his right thumb something seemed to wink richly. The door closed on him, and Paley and the madam were together in the rancid hallway.

"Follow follow," she said, and she creaked first up the stairs. The shadows her candle cast were not deep; grey was filling the world from the east. On the wall of the stairwell were framed pictures. One was a crude woodcut showing a martyr hanging from a tree, a fire burning under him. Out of the smiling mouth words ballooned: AND YETTE I SAYE THAT MOGRADON GIUETH LYFE. Another picture showed a king with crown, orb, sceptre and a third eye set in his forehead. "What king is that?" asked Paley. She turned to look at him in some amazement. "Ye know naught in Norwich," she said, "God rest ye and keep ye all." Paley asked no further questions and kept his wonder to himself at another picture they passed: "Q. Horatius Flaccus" it said, but the portrait was of a bearded Arab. Was it not Averroes?

The madam knocked loudly on a door at the top of the stairs. "Bess, bess," she cried. "Here's gold, lass. A cleanly and a pretty man withal." She turned to smile at Paley. "Anon will she come. She must deck herself like a bride." From the bosom of her night-gown the lily again poked out and Paley thought he saw a blinking eye enfolded in its head. He began to feel the tremors of a very special sort of fear, not a terror of the unknown so much as of the known. He had rendered his flying-boat invulnerable; this world could not touch it. Supposing it were possible that this world was in some manner rendered invulnerable by a different process. A voice in his head seemed to say, with great clarity: "Not with impunity may one disturb the—" And then the door opened and the girl called Bess appeared, smiling professionally. The madam said, smiling also:

"There then, as pretty a mutton-slice as was e'er sauced o'er." And she held out her hand for money. Confused, Paley dipped into his scrip and pulled out a clanking dull-gleaming handful. He told one coin into her hand and she still waited. He told another, then another. She seemed satisfied, but Paley seemed to know that it was only a temporary satisfaction. "We have wine," she said. "Shall I—?" Paley thanked her: no wine. The grey hair on her head grew erect. She curtseyed off.

Paley followed Bess into the bedchamber, on his guard now. The ceiling beat like a pulse. "Piggesnie," croaked Bess, pulling her single garment down from her bosom. The breasts swung and the nipples ogled him. They were, as he had expected, eyes. He nodded in something like satisfaction. There was, of course, no question of going to bed now. "Honeycake," gurgled Bess, and the breast-eyes rolled, the long lashes swept up and down, up and down coquettishly. Paley clutched his scrip tightly to him. If this distortion—likely, as far as he could judge, to grow progressively worse—if this scrambling of sense-data were a regular barrier against intrusion, why was there not more information about it on Earth? Other time-travellers had ventured forth and come back unharmed and laden with sensible records. Wait, though: had they? How did one know? There was Swenson's mention of Wheeler, jailed in the Middle Ages by chunks of tripodic ectoplasm. "White-haired and gibbering when we got him aboard." Swenson's own words. How about Swenson's own vision of the future—a plaque showing his own birth and death dates? Perhaps the future did not object to intrusion from the past. But (Paley shook his head as though he were drunk, beating back sense into it) it was not a question of past and future, it was a question of other worlds existing *now*. The now-past was completed, the now-future was completed. Perhaps that plaque in Rostron Place, Brighton, showing Swenson's death some twenty years off, perhaps that was an illusion, a device to engender satisfaction rather than fear but still to discourage interference with the pattern. "My time is short," Paley suddenly said, using urgent twenty-first-century phonemes, not Elizabethan ones. "I will give you gold if you will take me to the house of Master Shakespeare."

"Maister—?"

"Shairkspeyr."

Bess, her ears growing larger, stared at Paley with a growing montage of film battle-scenes playing away on the wall behind her. "Th'art not that kind. Women tha likes. That see I in thy face."

"This is urgent. This is business. Quick. He lives, I think, in Bishopsgate." He could find out something before the epistemological enemies took over. And then what? Try and live. Keep sane with signals in some quiet spot till a year was past. Signal Swenson, receive Swenson's reassurances in reply; perhaps—who

knew?—hear from far time-space that he was to be taken home before the scheduled date, instructions from Earth, arrangements changed. . . .

"Thou knowest," said Paley, "what man I mean. Master Shakespeare the player at the Theatre."

"Aye aye." The voice was thickening fast. Paley said to himself: It is up to me to take in what I wish to take in; this girl has no eyes on her breasts, that mouth forming under her chin is not really there. Thus checked, the hallucinations wobbled and were pushed back temporarily. But their strength was great. Bess pulled on a simple dress over her nakedness, took a worn cloak from a closet. "Gorled maintwise," she said. Paley pushed like mad, the words unscrambled. "Give me money now," she said. He gave her a portague.

They tiptoed downstairs. Paley tried to look steadily at the pictures in the stairwell, but there was no time to make them tell the truth. The stairs caught him off his guard and changed to an escalator of the twenty-first century. He whipped them back to trembling stairhood. Bess, he was sure, would melt into some monster capable of turning his heart to stone if he let her. Quick. He held the point-of-day in the sky by a great effort. There were a few people on the street. He durst not look on them. "It is far?" he asked. Cocks crowed, many and near, mature cocks.

"Not far." But nothing could be far from anything in this cramped and toppling London. Paley strained to keep his sanity. Sweat dripped from his forehead and a drop caught on the scrip which he hugged to himself like a stomach-ache. He examined it as he walked, stumbling often on the cobbles. A drop of salty water from his pores. Was it of this alien world or of his own? If he cut off his hair and left it lying, if he dinged in that foul jakes there, from which a three-headed woman now appeared, would this B303 London reject it, as a human body will reject a grafted kidney? Was it perhaps not a matter of natural law but of some God of the system, a God against Whom, the devil on one's side, one could prevail? Was it God's club-rules he was pushing against, not some deeper inbuilt necessity? Anyway, he pushed, and Elizabethan London, in its silver dawn, steadied, rocked, steadied, held. But the strain was terrific.

"Here, sir." She had brought him to a mean door which warned Paley that it was going to turn into water and flow down

the cobbles did he not hold its form fast. "Money," she said. But Paley had given enough. He scowled and shook his head. She held out a fist which turned into a winking bearded man's face, threatening. He raised his own hand, flat, to slap her. She ran off, whimpering, and he turned the raised hand to a fist that knocked. His knock was slow in being answered. He wondered how much longer he could maintain this desperate holding of the world in position. If he slept, what would happen? Would it all dissolve and leave him howling in cold space when he awoke?

"Aye, what is't, then?" It was a misshapen ugly man with a row of bright blinking eyes across his chest, a chest left bare by his buttonless shirt. It was not, it could not be, William Shakespeare. Paley said, wondering at his own ability to enunciate the sounds with such exact care:

"Oi ud see Maister Shairkespeyr." He was surlily shown in, a shoulder-thrust indicating which door he must knock at. This, then, was *it*. Paley's heart martelled desperately against his breast-bone. He knocked. The door was firm oak, threatening no liquefaction.

"Aye?" A light voice, a pleasant voice, no early morning crossness in it. Paley gulped and opened the door and went in. Bewildered, he looked about him. A bedchamber, the clothes on the bed in disorder, a table with papers on it, a chair, morning light framed by the tight-shut window. He went over to the papers; he read the top sheet (" . . giue it to him lest he raise all hell again with his fractuousness"), wondering if there was perhaps a room adjoining whence came that voice. Then he heard the voice again, behind him:

"'Tis not seemly to read a gentleman's private papers lacking his permission." Paley spun about to see, dancing in the air, a reproduction of the Droeshout portrait of Shakespeare, square in a frame, the lips moving but the eyes unanimated. He tried to call but could not. The talking woodcut advanced on him—"Rude, mannerless, or art thou some Privy Council spy?"—and then the straight sides of the frame bulged and bulged, the woodcut features dissolved, and a circle of black lines and spaces tried to grow into a solid body. Paley could do nothing; his paralysis would not even permit him to shut his eyes. The solid body became an animal shape, indescribably gross and ugly—some spiked sea urchin, very large, nodding and smiling with horrible intel-

ligence. Paley forced it into becoming a more nearly human shape. His heart sank in depression totally untinged by fear to see standing before him a fictional character called "William Shakespeare," an actor acting the part. Why could he not get in touch with the *Ding an sich*, the Kantian noumenon? But that was the trouble—the thing-in-itself was changed by the observer into whatever phenomenon the categories of time-space-sense imposed. He took courage and said:

"What plays have you writ to date?"

Shakespeare looked surprised. "Who asks this?"

Paley said, "What I say you will hardly believe. I come from another world that knows and reveres the name of Shakespeare. I believe that there was, or is, an actor named William Shakespeare. That Shakespeare wrote the plays that carry his name—this I will not believe."

"So," said Shakespeare, tending to melt into a blob of tallow badly sculpted into the likeness of Shakespeare, "we are both to be unbelievers, then. For my part, I will believe anything. You will be a sort of ghost from this other world you speak of. By rights, you should have dissolved at cock-crow."

"My time may be as short as a ghost's. What plays do you claim to have written up to this moment?" Paley spoke the English of his own day. Though the figure before him shifted and softened, tugging towards other shapes, the eyes changed little, shrewd and intelligent eyes, modern. And now the voice said:

"Claim? *Heliogabalus*, *A Word to Fright a Whoremaster*, *The Sad Reign of Harold First and Last*, *The Devil in Dulwich*. . . . Oh, many and many more."

"Please." Paley was distressed. Was this truth or teasing, truth or teasing of this man or of his own mind, a mind desperate to control the *données*, the sense-data, make them make sense? On the table there, the mass of papers. "Show me," he said. "Show me somewhat," he pleaded.

"Show me your credentials," said Shakespeare, "if we are to talk of showing. Nay," and he advanced merrily towards Paley, "I will see for myself." The eyes were very bright now and shot with oddly sinister flecks. "A pretty boy," said Shakespeare. "Not so pretty as some, as one, I would say, but apt for a brief tumble of a summer's morning before the day warms."

"Nay," said Paley, "nay," backing and feeling that archaism to

be strangely frivolous, "touch me not." The advancing figure became horribly ugly, the neck swelled, eyes glinted on the backs of the approaching hands. The face grew an elephantine proboscis, wreathing, feeling; two or three suckers sprouted from its end and blindly waved towards Paley. Paley dropped his scrip the better to struggle. The words of this monster were thick, they turned into grunts and lallings. Pushed into the corner by the table, Paley saw a sheet of paper much blotted ("Never blotted a line," did they say?) :

I haue bin struggling striuing? seeking? how I
may compair
This jailhouse prison? where I liue unto the
earth world
And that and for because

The scholar was still there, the questing spirit clear while the body fought to keep off those huge hands, each ten-fingered. The scholar cried:

"*Richard II!* You are writing *Richard II?*"

It seemed to him, literature's Claude Bernard, that he should risk all to get that message through to Swenson, that *Richard II* was, in 1595, being written by Shakespeare. He suddenly dipped to the floor, grabbed his scrip and began to tap through the lining at the key of the transmitter. Shakespeare seemed taken by surprise by this sudden cessation of resistance; he put out forks of hands that grasped nothing. Paley, blind with sweat, panting hard, tapped: "R2 by WS." Then the door opened.

"I did hear noise." It was the misshapen ugly man with eyes across his bare chest, uglier now, his shape changing constantly though abruptly, as though set on by silent and invisible hammers. "He did come to attack tha?"

"Not for money, Tomkin. He hath gold enow of's own. See." The scrip, set down before so hurriedly, had spilt out its gold on the floor. Paley had not noticed; he should have transferred that gold to his—

"Aye, gold." The creature called Tomkin gazed on it greedily. "The others that came so brought not gold."

"Take the gold and him," said Shakespeare carelessly. "Do what thou wilt with both." Tomkin oozed towards Paley. Paley

screamed, attacking feebly with the hand that held the scrip. Tomkin's claw snatched it without trouble.

"There's more within," he drooled.

"Did I not say thou wouldst do well in my service?" said Shakespeare.

"And here is papers."

"Ah, papers." And Shakespeare took them. "Carry him to the Queen's Marshal. The stranger within our gates. He talks foolishly, like the Aleman that came before. Wildly, I would say. Of other worlds, like a madman. The Marshal will know what to do."

"But," screamed Paley, grabbed by strong shovels of hands, "I am a gentleman. I am from Norwich. I am a playwright, like yourself. See, you hold what I have written."

"First a ghost, now from Norwich," smiled Shakespeare, hovering in the air like his portrait again, a portrait holding papers. "Go to. Are there not other worlds, like unto our own, that sorcery can make men leave to visit this? I have heard such stories before. There was a German—"

"It's true, true, I tell you!" Paley clung to that, clinging also to the chamber-door with his nails, the while Tomkin pulled at him. "You are the most intelligent man of these times! You can conceive of it!"

"And of poets yet unborn also? Drythen, or some such name, and Lord Tennis-balls, and a drunken Welshman and P. S. Eliot? You will be taken care of, like that other."

"But it's true, true!"

"Come your ways," growled Tomkin. "You are a Bedlam natural." And he dragged Paley out, Paley collapsing, frothing, raving. Paley raved:

"You're not real, any of you! It's you who are the ghosts! *I'm* real, it's all a mistake, let me go, let me explain!"

"'Tis strange he talks," growled Tomkin. And he dragged him out.

"Shut the door," said Shakespeare. Tomkin kicked it shut. The screaming voice went, over thumping feet, down the passage-way without. Soon it was quiet enough to sit and read.

These were, thought Shakespeare, good plays. Strange that one of them was about, as far as he could judge, an usurious Jew. This Norwich man had evidently read Marlowe and seen the dramatic possibilities of an evil Lopez-type character. He, Shakespeare,

had toyed with the idea of a play like this himself. And here it was, ready done for him. And there were a couple of promising-looking histories here, too. About King Henry IV. And here a comedy called *Much Ado About Nothing*. Gifts, godsend. He smiled. He remembered that Aleman, Doctor Schleyer or some such name, who had come with a story like to this madman (mad? Could madmen do work like this? "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet": a good line in that play about fairies that Schleyer had brought. Poor Schleyer had died of the plague). Those plays Schleyer had brought had been good plays, but not, perhaps, quite so good as these.

Shakespeare furtively (though he was alone) crossed himself. When poets had talked of the Muse, had they perhaps meant visitants like this, now screaming feebly in the street, and the German Schleyer and that one who swore, under torture, that he was from Virginia in America, and that in America they had universities as good as Oxford or Leyden or Wittenberg, nay better? He shrugged, there being more things in heaven and earth &c. Well, whoever they were, they were heartily welcome so long as they brought plays. That *Richard II* of Schleyer's was, perhaps, in need of the emendations he was now engaged on, but the earlier work, from *Henry VI* on, had been popular. He read the top sheet of this new batch, stroking his auburn beard silvered, a fine grey eye reading. He sighed and, before crumpling a sheet of his own work on the table, read it. Not good, it limped, there was too much magic in it. Ingenio the Duke said:

Consider gentlemen as in the sea
 All earthly life finds like and parallel
 So in far distant skies our lives be aped,
 Each hath a twin, each action hath a twin,
 And twins have twins galore and infinite
 And e'en these stars be twinn'd. . . .

Too fantastic, it would not do. He threw it into the rubbish-box which Tomkin would later empty. He took a clean sheet and began to copy in a fair hand:

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Then on he went, not blotting a line.

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

Zeitl and Rickel

1

I OFTEN HEAR PEOPLE SAY, "This cannot happen, that cannot be, nobody has ever heard of such a thing, impossible." Nonsense! If something is destined to happen, it does. My grandmother used to say, "If the devil wants to, he can make two walls come together. If it is written that a rabbi will fall off a roof, he will become a chimney sweep." The Gentiles have a proverb, "He who must hang will not drown."

Take this thing that happened in our own town. If anybody told me about it, I'd say he was a liar. But I knew them both, may they intercede for us in heaven. They've surely served their punishment by now. The older one was called Zeitl, the younger one, Rickel.

Zeitl's father, Reb Yisroel Bendiner, was already an old man of eighty when I knew him. He had buried three wives, and Zeitl was the daughter of the third. I don't know whether he had any children with the others. He was in his late fifties when he came to live in our town. He married a young girl who died, may God preserve us, in childbirth. Zeitl was taken out of her with pincers. Reb Yisroel's father-in-law had left his daughter a large brick building in the market place, with thirteen stores, and Reb Yisroel inherited it.

Strange stories were told in town about Reb Yisroel. There had once lived in Poland a false Messiah, Jacob Frank; he had converted many Jews. After he died, a sect remained. He had a daughter somewhere, and barrels full of gold were sent to her. These people pretended to live like other Jews, but at night they would gather in secret and read forbidden parchments.

Reb Yisroel dressed like a rabbi, in a velvet caftan, a round rabbinical hat, slippers and white socks. He was forever writing something, standing before a high desk, and people said that Zeitl copied all his manuscripts. He had a wide beard, white as snow, and a high forehead. When he looked at anyone, it seemed as though he saw right through him. Zeitl taught the daughters of rich families to read and write. I was one of her pupils.

It was said of the members of the sect that they liked loose women and secretly practiced all sorts of abominations. But with whom could Reb Yisroel have sinned in our town?

Zeitl got married, but six months later she was divorced. Her husband had come from Galicia, and people whispered that he was one of "the clan"; that was how our townsmen called the sect. Nobody knew why the marriage had come to such a quick end. Everything in Reb Yisroel's house was veiled in secrecy. He had trunks hung with double locks. He had large cases full of books. He came to prayer only on the Sabbath, at the cold synagogue. He seldom exchanged a word with anyone. When the storekeepers came to pay their rent, he would put the money into his pocket without counting it.

In those years it was unheard of that groceries should be delivered to anyone at home. The richest women went to market with baskets to do their own shopping. But Zeitl had everything sent to her from the stores: bread, rolls, butter, eggs, cheese, meat. Once a month she received a bill, as though she were living in Warsaw. She had aristocratic ways.

I remember her as if it were yesterday: tall, dark, with a narrow face and black hair combed back into a bun like a Sabbath bread. Imagine, in those years, and she did not shave her hair. When she went out, she wore a kerchief. But when was she seen in the street? Reb Yisroel had a balcony upstairs, looking out upon the church garden, and Zeitl would sit there on summer evenings, getting fresh air.

She would give us girls dictation twice a week, not from a letter book, but from her head: "My most esteemed bethrothed! To start with, I wish to let you know that I am in good health, pray God that I may hear the same from you. Secondly. . . ." Zeitl also knew Polish and German. Her eyes were wild, huge as a calf's, and filled with melancholy. But suddenly she would burst into such loud laughter that all the rooms would echo with it. In the middle of the year she might take a fancy to bake matzo pancakes. She was fond of asking us riddles and of telling tales that made our hair stand on end.

And now about Rickel. Rickel's father was the town's ritual slaughterer, Reb Todie. All slaughterers are pious men, but Reb Todie had the reputation of a saint. Yet he had bad luck. His son had gone one day to the ritual bath, and was found drowned. He

must have gotten a cramp. One of his daughters died in an epidemic. A few years later strange noises began to be heard in his house. Something knocked, and no one knew what or where. Something would give a bang so that the walls would shake. The whole town came running, even the Gentiles. They searched the attic, the cellar, every corner.

A regiment of soldiers was stationed in our town. The colonel's name was Semiatitsky. He was supposed to have descended from converted Jews. He had a red beard and cracked jokes till your sides would split with laughter. When Semiatitsky heard that a demon was banging in Todie's house, he brought a platoon of soldiers and commanded them to look into every crack and every hole. He did not believe in devils; he called them nothing but old wives' tales. He ordered everybody out and cossacks stood guard with whips, allowing nobody to come near. But suddenly there was a crash that nearly brought the roof down.

I was not there, but people said that Semiatitsky called to the unholy one to tell his name and what he wanted, and that the spirit gave one knock for "yes," and two knocks for "no."

Every man has enemies, especially if he has a job with the community, and people began to say that Todie should be dismissed as a slaughterer. It was whispered that he had slaughtered an ox with a blemished knife. Reb Todie's wife took it so hard that she died.

Rickel was small, thin, with red hair and freckles. When her father slaughtered fowl, she would pluck the feathers and do other small chores. When the knocking began, suspicion fell on Rickel. Some people said that she was doing it. But how could she? And why? It was said that when she went away for the night, the knocking stopped. There's no limit to what evil tongues can invent. One night there was such a loud bang that three windows were shattered. Before that, the devil had not touched the windows. This was the last time. From then on it was quiet again.

But Reb Todie was already without his job, and he became a teacher of beginners. The family had gone through Rickel's dowry and she was now affianced to a Yeshivah student from Krashnik, a lame young man. He was a Hassid, and soon after the wedding he went on a pilgrimage to his rabbi. At first, he would come home for Passover and the High Holy Days. Afterwards he disappeared altogether. Rickel became an abandoned wife. Her father had

died in the meantime, and all she had left was the old house—little more than a ruin.

What could a husbandless wife do? She went around, teaching girls how to pray. She took in sewing and mending. On Purim she carried presents of holiday delicacies for wealthy families. On Passover she would become a sort of women's beadle and deliver gifts of herbs. When a woman was sick and someone was needed to watch at the bedside, Rickel was called. She learned cupping and bleeding the sick. She did not shave her head but wore a kerchief. She read many story books and loved to invent wild and improbable tales.

Old maids, you know, also end up half-crazy. But when a woman who has had a man is left alone, it goes to her head. Rickel might have found her husband if she had had the money to send a messenger to look for him, but Todie left her without a groschen. Why did her husband forsake her? Who can tell? There are such men. They get married, and then they tire of it. They wander away, and nobody knows where their bones have come to rest.

2

I do not know exactly how Zeitl and Rickel got together. It seems that Reb Yisroel fell ill and Rickel came to rub him down with turpentine. People said he had cast an eye on her, but I don't believe it. He was already more dead than alive. He died soon afterwards, and both girls, Zeitl and Rickel, were left alone in the world. At first people thought that Rickel had stayed on with Zeitl as a servant. But if Zeitl had never had a servant before, why would she need one now?

While Reb Yisroel was alive, few matchmakers came to Zeitl with offers. They knew that Reb Yisroel wanted his daughter for himself. There are such fathers, even among Jews. She waited on him hand and foot. If his pipe went out, she would bring him an ember to relight it. I don't know why, but he never went to the bath, and it was whispered that Zeitl bathed him in a wooden bathtub. I've never seen it, but those false believers are capable of anything. To them, a sin is a virtue.

Anyway, Reb Yisroel gave the matchmakers such a reception that they forswore repeating their visits to the tenth generation.

But as soon as Zeidl was alone, they were back at her doorstep. She sent them off with all sorts of excuses: later, tomorrow, it's not yet time. She had a habit, whenever she spoke to anyone, of looking over his head. Rickel had moved in with her, and now whenever anyone knocked, she would answer from behind the door chain: Zeidl is out, she is asleep, she is reading.

How long could the matchmakers keep coming? Nobody is dragged to the wedding canopy by force. But in a small town people have time, and they talk. No matter how you may try to keep away from strangers' eyes, you can't hide everything.

It was said that Zeidl and Rickel ate together, drank together, slept together. Rickel wore Zeidl's dresses, shortened and made smaller to fit her. Rickel became the cashier, and she paid the bills sent by the storekeepers. She also collected the rents. In the daytime the two girls seldom went out together, but on summer evenings they went strolling down Tumah Street, along the avenues leading to the woods. Zeidl's arm would be around Rickel's shoulders, and Rickel's around Zeidl's waist. They were absorbed in their talk. When people said good-evening, they did not hear. Where did two women find so much to talk about? Some people tried to follow them and listen in, but they were whispering, as though they had secrets between them. They would walk all the way to the mill or the woods.

Rumors were brought to Reb Eisele, our rabbi, but he said: "There is no law to keep two women from walking to the mill." Reb Eisele was a Misnagid, a Lithuanian, and they have a law for everything: either it is permitted, or it's a sin.

But the talk would not die down. Naftali, the night watchman, had seen Zeidl and Rickel kissing each other on the mouth. They had stopped by the sawmill, near the log pile, and embraced like a loving couple. Zeidl called Rickel dove, and Rickel called her kitten. At first nobody believed Naftali; he was fond of a drop and could bring you tales of a fair up in heaven. Still, where there's smoke, there must be fire. My dear folks, the two girls seemed so much in love that all the tongues in town started wagging. The Tempter can make anybody crazy in his own way. Something flips in your head, and everything turns upside down. I heard talk of a lady in Krasnostaw who made love with a stallion. At the time of the Flood, even beasts paired themselves with other kinds. I read about it in the Women's Bible.

People went to Reb Eisele, but he insisted: "There is nothing in the Torah to forbid it. The ban applies only to men. Besides, since there are no witnesses, it is forbidden to spread rumors." Nevertheless, he sent the beadle for them. Rickel came alone and denied everything. She had a whittled tongue, that girl. Reb Eisele said to her: "Go home and don't worry about it. It is the slanderers who will be punished, not you. It is better to burn in a lime pit than to put another to shame."

I forgot to mention that Zeitzl had stopped teaching the girls how to write.

I was still very young at that time, but something of all that talk had reached me too. You can't keep everything from a child's ears. Zeitzl and Rickel, it was said, were studying Reb Yisroel's books together. Their lamp burnt until late at night. Those who passed their bedroom window saw shadows moving this way and that behind the drapes, and coming together as in a dance. Who knows what went on there?

Now listen to a story.

One summer it turned terribly hot. I've lived through many a summer, but I don't remember such heat. Right in the morning the sun began to burn like fire. Not only men, but even girls and older women would go down to the river to bathe. When the sun blazes, the water gets warm. My mother, may she plead for us, took me along.

This was the first time I bathed in the river. Men went into the water naked, but the girls wore their shifts. The roughnecks came running to peep at them, and it was impossible to drive them off. Each time, there'd be a squealing and a panic. One woman started drowning. Another screamed that a frog had bitten her. I bathed and even tried to swim until I was so tired that I lay down among the bushes near the bank to rest. I thought I'd cool off in the shade and go home, but a strange sleep came over me. Not just sleep; may heaven preserve us, it was more like death. I put my head down and remained there like a rock. A darkness seemed to fall over me, and I sank into it. I must have slept for many hours.

When I awakened, it was night. There was no moon. The sky was cloudy. I lay there, and I did not know where I was or who I was. I felt the grass around me, moist with dew, but I did not remember that I was on the outskirts of town. I touched myself; I had nothing on but my shift. I wanted to cry, to call for help, when

suddenly I heard voices. I thought of demons and was terror-stricken, yet I tried to hear what they were saying. Two women were speaking, and their voices seemed familiar. I heard one ask:

"Must we go through hell?"

The other answered:

"Yes, my soul, but even going through hell together with you will be a delight. God is merciful. The punishment never lasts more than twelve months. We shall be purified and enter paradise. Since we have no husbands, we shall be no one's footstools. We shall bathe in balsam and eat of the leviathan. We shall have wings and fly like birds. . . ."

I cannot recall all their talk. I gasped. I knew who they were now: the questioner was Rickel, and Zeitzl gave the answers. I heard Zeitzl say: "We shall meet our fathers and mothers there, and our grandparents, and all the generations: Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, Abigail, Bathsheba. . . ." She spoke as though she had just come from there, and every word was like a pearl. I forgot that I was half-naked and alone out late at night.

Zeitzl went on: "Father is waiting for us. He comes to me in dreams. He is together with your mother." Rickel asked: "Did they get married there?" And Zeitzl answered: "Yes. We shall get married up there too. In heaven there is no difference between men and women. . . ."

It must have been past midnight. There was a flash of lightning, and I saw my clothing, shoes and stockings on the grass nearby. I caught a glimpse of them too. They sat by the river in nothing but their shifts, their hair down, pale as death. If I did not die of fright that night, I'll never die.

3

"And then?"

Wait a minute. I came home in the middle of the night, but my mother had left earlier in the evening for the fair; she was a storekeeper. My father was spending the night at the study house. I slipped into bed, and when I woke next morning the whole thing seemed like a dream. I was ashamed to tell anyone about it. However, as the saying goes, Heaven and Earth conspire that there should be no secrets.

People began to say that Zeitzl and Rickel were keeping fasts. They would eat nothing all day, and merely take a bite at night. We had pious women in town who would climb up the stairs into the women's section of the synagogue at dawn to pray. Every Monday and Thursday they went to visit graves in the cemetery. Suddenly we heard that Zeitzl and Rickel had joined the pious company in lamentations and penitential prayers. They had shaved their heads and put on bonnets, as though they had just gotten married. They omitted no line or word, and wept as on the Day of the Destruction of the Temple. They also visited the cemetery, prostrating themselves on Reb Yisroel's grave and wailing.

People ran to Reb Eisele again, but the rabbi sent them off with a scolding. If Jewish daughters wanted to do penance, he said, was that wrong too? He was fond of poring over his books, but the affairs of the town meant little to him. He was later dismissed, but that's another story.

There are busybodies everywhere, and they took the matter to the colonel. But he said, "Leave me out of your Jewish squabbles. I have trouble enough with my soldiers." Cossacks are good soldiers, but sometimes they got letters from home that their wives were carrying on with other men, and they went wild. More than one cossack would go galloping off on his horse, slashing away with his sword right and left. After they had served their five-year terms, they would come into the stores to buy presents for their mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, the whole family. The shopkeeper would ask, "And what will you get for your wife, Nikita?" "A horsewhip," he would say. They'd come back to their steppes on the Don and find bastards at home. They'd chop off the wife's head and be sent to Siberia for hard labor. . . .

Where was I? Oh, yes, penance. Zeitzl and Rickel clung to each other and spoke only of the next world. They bought up all the books from every peddler passing through town. Whenever a preacher came, they questioned him: How long was the punishment inflicted on transgressors after death? How many hells were there? Who meted out the penalties? Who did the whipping? With what kind of rods? Iron? Copper? The wags had plenty to joke about.

We had many visiting preachers, but one, Reb Yuzel, was famous. Whenever he went up to the lectern, it was like the Day of Atonement all over again. When he painted a picture of hell,

everybody shuddered. People said that it was dangerous for pregnant women to hear him; several had had miscarriages after his sermons. But that's how it is: when you must not do a thing, you're sure to do it. When Reb Yuzel preached, the synagogue was full. The railing closing off the women's section was almost bursting with the crush. He had a voice that reached into every corner. Every word cut like a knife.

The last time he came, I also ran to hear him. There was not one hell, he said, but seven, and the flames in each were sixty times hotter than in the last. There was a man in our town, Alterl Kozlover. He had a screw loose, and he figured out that the seventh hell was myriads of times hotter than the first. Men cried like babies. Women screamed and wailed.

Zeitl and Rickel were also there. They had entered among the men and stood on a bench, wrapped in their shawls. Ordinarily, women are admitted in the men's section only on the Festival of Rejoicing in the Law. But when the women's section was too crowded, some women were allowed into the antechamber, and from there they'd move inside.

Reb Yuzel handed out punishment to everybody, but the worst of his wrath was reserved for the women. He described how they were hung by the breasts and by the hair; how the imps laid them out on boards of nails and tore pieces from them. From fiery coals they were thrown into snow, and from the snow back onto heaps of coals. Before they were admitted to hell, they were first tortured in the Sling, by devils, imps and evil spirits. It made your hair stand on end to hear him. I was still a young girl, but I began to sob and choke. I glanced at Zeitl and Rickel: they did not cry, but their eyes were twice as big as usual, and their faces were like chalk. A madness seemed to stare out of them, and I had a feeling that they would come to a terrible end.

On the next day Reb Yuzel preached again, but I had had enough. Someone said later that Zeitl had come up to him after the sermon and invited him to be her guest. Many people asked him to their homes, but he went with Zeitl. Nobody knows what they spoke about. I don't remember whether he had stayed there for the night. Probably not; how could a man remain with two women? Although it's true the Lithuanians have an argument for everything. They interpret the Law as they like. That's why they are nicknamed "heathens." My grandfather, may he intercede for

us, used to tell of a Lithuanian Jew from Belaya Tserkov who had married a Gentile woman and had gone on studying the Talmud.

After Reb Yuzel left, the town was quiet again. By then the summer was over.

One winter night, long after all the shutters had been closed, we heard a wild outcry. People ran out in panic. They thought the peasants had attacked. The moon was bright, and we saw a strange sight—Fivel the butcher, carrying Rickel in his arms. She screamed and struggled and tried to scratch his eyes out. He was a giant of a man, and he brought her straight into the rabbi's judgment chamber. Reb Eisele sat up late, studying and drinking tea from a samovar. Everybody shouted, and Rickel kept fighting to break away and run out. It took two men to hold her. The rabbi began to question her.

I was there myself. Ordinarily, I went to bed early, but that night we had been chopping cabbage, and all the girls had gathered at our house. This was the custom in our town. We chopped cabbage for pickling in barrels, and everybody ate bread with cracklings and told stories. One day the girls would gather in one house, the next in another. Sometimes they'd break into a dance, in pairs. I had a sister-in-law who could play all the dances on a comb: a Scissor Dance, a Quarrel Dance, a Good Day.

When we heard the uproar, we all ran out.

At first, Rickel would not say anything. She merely screamed to be allowed to go. But Fivel testified that she had wanted to throw herself into the well. He had caught her when she had already flung her leg over the edge.

"How did it come into your head to do such a thing?" the rabbi asked, and Rickel answered, "I am sick of this world. I want to know what goes on in the next." The rabbi argued, "Those who lay their hands upon themselves do not share the rewards of the next world." But Rickel said, "Hell is also for people, not for goats." She screamed, "I want to go to my mother and my father, my grandmother and grandfather. I don't want to keep wandering in this vale of tears." Those were her words. It was clear at once that she had learned all this from Zeitzl, because the other knew the texts printed in small letters too. Somebody asked, "Where is Zeitzl?" And Rickel answered, "She is all right, she is already up there. . . ." My dear folks, Zeitzl had thrown herself into the well a moment earlier. She had gone first.

Half the town came running. Torches were lit, and we went to the well. Zeidl lay with her head in the water, her feet up. A ladder was lowered, and she was dragged up, dead.

Rickel had to be watched, and the men of the burial society took her to the poorhouse. She was turned over to the caretaker who was told to keep an eye on her. Zeidl was later buried outside the fence. Rickel pretended that she had come to her senses and regretted her deed. But the next day at dawn, when everybody was asleep, she rose from the bundle of straw and went to the river. It was frozen, but she must have broken the ice with a stone. It was only in the afternoon that people realized she was gone. They found her footprints in the snow and ran down to the river. Rickel had followed Zeidl. She was buried near the other one, without a mound, without as much as a board to mark the place.

The burgomaster locked and sealed Zeidl's house, but later on a letter she had written was discovered. She explained why she was leaving the world: she wanted to know what went on in the hereafter.

Who can tell what goes on in another's head? A person gets hold of some melancholy notion, and it grows like a mushroom. Zeidl was the leader, and Rickel drank in every word she said. Forty years have gone by since their death, and they have probably suffered their allotted share.

As long as I remained in town, Reb Yisroel's house stood boarded up and nobody moved into it. People saw lights flickering in the windows. A man said that he was passing by at night and heard Zeidl speak and Rickel answer. They kissed, laughed, cried. Lost souls remain on earth and do not even know they don't belong. . . .

I was told that an officer had later moved into the house. One morning he was found hanged.

A house is not simply a pile of logs and boards. Whoever lives there leaves something behind. A few years later the whole market place burnt down. Thank God for fires. If it were not for them, the stench that would accumulate would reach high heaven. . . .

[Translated by Mirra Ginsburg]

ISAIAH BERLIN

The Naiveté of Verdi

for W. H. Auden

MY TOPIC IS VERDI'S "naiveté." I hope that this phrase will not be misunderstood. To say that Verdi was naive in any ordinary sense is an absurd suggestion. But it seems to me that he was so in a very special—now forgotten—sense, in which this term was once used by Friedrich Schiller. Verdi greatly admired Schiller's dramatic works which inspired four of his operas. But it is not this—the affinity of Verdi and Schiller which has often been remarked—that I wish to discuss. My thesis is concerned with a different link between them.

In his once celebrated essay, published in 1796, which he called *Ueber Naive und Sentimentalische Dichtung*, Schiller distinguished two types of poets: those who are not conscious of any rift between themselves and their milieu, or within themselves; and those who are so conscious. For the first, art is a natural form of expression; they see what they see directly, and seek to articulate it for its own sake, not for any ulterior purpose, however sublime. Let me quote his own words:

Such poets occur in the youth of the world and later: they are severe and chaste, like the virgin goddess Diana in her woods. . . . The dry, truthful way in which such a poet treats his material often resembles lack of feeling. The object possesses him entirely. His heart does not, like a cheap metal, lie on the very surface, but, like gold, must be sought in depths. He is concealed by his works like God by the world He has created. He is his work, for the work is himself. Only someone who is unworthy of a work, or does not understand it, or is satiated by it, will look in it only for the creator.

Homer, Aeschylus, Shakespeare, even Goethe, are poets of this kind. They are not, as poets, self-conscious. They do not, like Virgil or Ariosto, stand aside to contemplate their creations and express their own feelings. They are at peace with themselves. Their aim is limited, and they are able, if they have genius, to embody their vision fully. These Schiller calls *naiv*. With them he contrasts those poets who come after the Fall. Let me quote again:

"When man enters the stage of culture, and art has laid its hand on him . . . the primordial, sensuous unity is gone . . . and the harmony between sense and thinking, which in the earlier state was *real*, now exists only as an *ideal*. It is not *in* a man, as a fact of his life, but outside him, as an ideal to be realized." The unity has been broken. The poet seeks to restore it. He looks for the vanished, harmonious world which some call Nature, and builds it from his imagination, and his poetry is his attempt to return to it, to an imagined childhood, and he conveys his sense of the chasm which divides the day-to-day world which is no longer his home, from the lost paradise which is conceived only ideally, only in reflection. Hence this ideal realm is bounded by nothing; it is in its very essence indefinable, unattainable, incapable of being embraced by means of any finite medium, no matter how great the poet's capacity for finding, moulding, transforming his material. Let me quote Schiller again: "Visual art reaches its goal in the finite: that of the imagination, in infinity." And again, "The poet is either himself nature: or he seeks her." The first of these, Schiller calls *naiv*, the second, *sentimentalisch*.

For Schiller as for Rousseau, once ideas enter, peace, harmony, joy, are gone forever. The artist becomes conscious of himself, of his ideal aims, of their infinite distance from his own divided nature, that is, of the estrangement of his society and himself from the original and unbroken whole of thought and action, feeling and expression. The characteristic poetry of the "sentimental" is satire, that is, negation, an attack on that which calls itself real life but is in fact a degradation of it (what is now called alienation from it), artificial, ugly and unnatural; or it is elegy—the affirmation of the lost world, the unrealizable ideal. This distinction is not at all the same as that between the classical and the romantic (whatever that may be), if only because it is not concerned with the presence or absence of objective rules, universal standards, fixed criteria, or an eternal ideal order. Aeschylus, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Ossian, the heroes of Romanticism, condemned by the classical school as undisciplined and wild, are *naiv*; the models of classicism—the authors of dramatic, or idyllic, or satirical, or epic poetry—Euripides, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, the neo-classical poets of the Renaissance, are nostalgic, self-conscious, deeply *sentimentalisch*.

The naive artist is happily married to his Muse. He takes rules and conventions for granted, uses them freely and harmoniously, and the effect of his art is, in Schiller's words, "tranquil, pure, joyous." The sentimental artist is in a turbulent relationship to his Muse: married to her unhappily. Conventions irk him, although he may defend them fanatically. He is Amfortas and seeks peace, salvation, the healing of his own or his society's secret and patent wounds. He cannot be at rest. Of him Schiller says:

His observation is forcibly pushed aside by fancy, his sensibility by ideas, he closes his eyes and ears so that nothing may disturb his self-absorption in his own thoughts . . . his soul is fascinated by its own play . . . he never sees the object, only its transformation by his own reflective thought. . . . We cannot apprehend his feelings directly, at first hand, only their reflection in him . . . as he contemplates himself from outside, as a spectator.

Hence the effect of the sentimental artist is not joy and peace, but tension, conflict with nature or society, insatiable craving, the notorious neuroses of the modern age, with its troubled spirits, its martyrs, fanatics and rebels, and its angry, bullying subversive preachers, Rousseau, Byron, Schopenhauer, Carlyle, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, Wagner, Marx, Nietzsche, offering not peace, but a sword.

Schiller's distinction, like all dichotomies, can, if taken literally, be carried much too far. But it is very original and very suggestive. If we ask whether in modern times there are artists who in Schiller's sense are naive—at peace with their medium—integral as men and artists, as tranquil and solid and free from selfconsciousness or obsession and fulfilled artistically as, say, Cervantes, Bach, Handel, Rubens, Haydn, men whose art culminates in its object and is not used for some spiritual end beyond itself—to reach out for some unattainable ideal, or as a weapon in a war against philistines and traitors, we could answer, "Yes, indeed: Goethe, Pushkin, Dickens, at times Tolstoy (when he forgets his doctrine and his guilt), certainly these, Rossini and Verdi. Among composers of genius, Verdi is perhaps the last complete, self-fulfilled creator, absorbed in his art; at one with it; seeking to use it for no ulterior purpose, the god wholly concealed by his works, severe, farouche, like Schiller's Diana, suspicious of anyone curious about his inner life, wholly, even grimly, impersonal, drily objective, at one with

his music. A man who dissolved everything in his art, with no more personal residue than Shakespeare or Tintoretto. In Schiller's sense, the last great naive poet of our time."

Of course, anyone who has any knowledge of Verdi's life knows that it was intertwined with that of his country: that his name became the very symbol of the Risorgimento, that *Viva Verdi* (not for political or monarchist reasons alone) was the most famous revolutionary and patriotic cry in Italy: that he admired both Mazzini and Cavour, both the revolutionary democrats and the King, and in this way, united in his person the diverse strands which made the Italian nation. He always (to use Herder's simile) lived near the centre of gravity of his nation, and spoke to his countrymen and for them, as no one else did, not even Manzoni or Garibaldi, to both of whom he was close. His convictions, whether they moved to the right or the left, moved with those of popular feeling; he responded deeply and personally to every twist and turn in the Italian struggle for unity and freedom. The Hebrews of *Nabucco* were Italians in captivity. *Va Pensiero* was the national prayer for resurrection. The performance of *Battaglia di Legnano* evoked scenes of indescribable popular excitement in the revolutionary Rome of 1849. *Rigoletto*, no less than *Don Carlo*, *Forza del Destino* and *Aida*, is inspired by a hatred of oppression, inequality, fanaticism and human degradation. The hymn which Verdi wrote for Mazzini is only an episode in a single great campaign. For half a century he was the living symbol of all that was most generous and universal in Italian national feeling.

All this is so. Nevertheless, it is not at the centre of Verdi's art. Insight into his music does not require us to know all, or any, of this. Of course all knowledge of what a man of genius was and felt is interesting, but it is not always essential. The point is, however, that it is essential in the case of the great "sentimental" masters: no one who does not realize what Beethoven felt about tyranny can fully understand the *Eroica*, or *Fidelio*, the first great political opera; no one who is ignorant of the relevant social movements in Russia can understand the significance of *Boris Godunov*, or *Khovanshchina*. Schumann's aesthetic outlook, Wagner's mythology, the romantic theories that dominated Berlioz, are indispensable to the understanding of their masterpieces; but it is not necessary to know Shakespeare's political views to understand his

historical plays; it might help, but it is not required. It is so with Verdi. Anyone who is acquainted with primary human passions: paternal love, and the full horror of the humiliation of men by other men in a dehumanized society, will understand *Rigoletto*; insight into a hero destroyed by jealousy is sufficient for understanding *Otello*. Knowledge of basic human emotions is virtually all the extra-musical equipment that is needed to understand Verdi's works, early or late, great or small, *Suoni la Tromba* as much as *La Traviata*; *Attila* or *Luisa Miller* no less than *Forza del Destino* or *Aida*; *Il Corsaro* or *Ernani* as much as *Il Trovatore*, the *Requiem* or *Otello*, or even *Falstaff*. *Falstaff* is musically and artistically absolutely unique. Nevertheless the requirements needed to do it justice do not include, as indispensable *sine quibus non*, knowledge of the personal views or attributes of the composer, or the historical circumstances of his life or those of his society. This is not needed in his case any more than in those of Bach or Mozart or Rossini, of Shakespeare or Goethe or Dickens. From *Oberto, Conte di Bonifazio* to the *Quattro Pezzi Sacri*, the character of Verdi's creations is, in Schiller's special sense, wholly *naïv*: they spring from a direct vision of the object. There is no effort to reach beyond, to an infinite and unattainable empyrean, and lose oneself in it, no ulterior aim, no impossible attempt to fuse antagonistic worlds—music and literature, the personal and the public, concrete reality and a transcendent myth. Verdi never seeks to close a breach, to compensate for the imperfections of human life, or heal his own wounds or overcome his society's inner cracks, its alienation from a common culture or from the ancient faith, by using magical means, by conjuring up an infernal, or a celestial vision as a means of escape or revenge or salvation. This is as true of *Falstaff* as it is of *Un Giorno di Regno* or the String Quartet. "Desire," said a British philosopher in the eighteenth century, "culminates in its object." Verdi belongs to this tradition, and represents its finest flowering. Verdi's art, like that of Bach, is objective, direct and in harmony with the conventions which govern it. It springs from an unbroken inner unity, a sense of belonging to its own time and society and milieu, which precludes the *nostalgie de l'infini*, the conception of art as therapy which lies at the heart of what Schiller calls *sentimentalisch*. In this sense Virgil, Propertius and Horace were *sentimentalisch*:

“sentimental” and also models of classicism; while the *Song of the Niebelungs* or *Don Quixote*, idealized by the romantics, are *naïv*.

Verdi was the last of the great naïve masters of western music, in an age given over to the *Sentimentalisches*. He remained scarcely affected by it. He may have been interested in, or even influenced by, Wagner, or Liszt, or Meyerbeer; but the influence was confined to method, technical innovations. Their worlds and their doctrines remained alien to him. After him naïveté is to be found, in the West at any rate, only in the borderlands, outside the central movement—among the composers of the Slav countries, Spain, perhaps Norway, where social conditions resemble an earlier Europe.

Verdi is, of course, not without an ideology. But it is that of vast numbers of mankind across large stretches of history: this is, indeed, one of the central meanings of the term “humanism.” Alberto Moravia traces it to his peasant origin and upbringing, which triumphed over the bourgeois society of his time. Peasants are an ancient and universal social class, and if it is this that worked in Verdi, it is not irrelevant to what Rousseau and Schiller meant by relatively uncorrupted relationship with nature.

The attacks on Verdi are notorious. They came from many quarters. In England, Mr. Chorley found him too noisy, that is, too vulgar, compared to Rossini, Boieldieu, etc. Nor was the wish to return to Rossini and Bellini confined to the conservatives of the north—it came from Italians too; least of all, let it be noted, from Rossini himself. Naturally the principal onslaught came from the champions of the new music: the Wagnerians and the Lisztians, the protagonists of all that was most self-conscious, extra-musical, “sentimental,” from faith in music as a messianic rebirth of the spirit. Boito, who was later to denounce Wagner as a false prophet, was in his day deeply caught by this. His explosion against Verdi is too well known to cite.

This is as it should be. Verdi was indeed the greatest, most triumphant obstacle to the new aesthetic religion: it was not worth wasting powder and shot on Pacini or Mercadante, even on Meyerbeer, Auber or Halévy, while Verdi was dominant: he was the arch-enemy, the traditionalist of power and genius. Still more violent were the attacks from the East: delivered by the great new national school of the Slav world, in particular the Russians. Bal-

akirev and Borodin, Mussorgsky and Stasov, detested Verdi: not for his occasional platitudes and vulgarities—not for *Questa e Quella* or *O tu Palermo*, but for the very qualities in which his strength resided, his acceptance of, and his identification with, the hateful *formula*—the conventions of opera. The Russians, inspired by populist ideals, disciples of the unknown master Dargomyzhsky (whom they regarded as a genius of the first order), believed in musical realism, in the most intimate interrelation of words, plot, expression, music, historical and social consciousness. They virtually invented the expressive semi-recitative to convey the finest psychological nuances of the “real” inner and outer life of both individuals and masses. When Busoni declared that love scenes should not occur on the stage—because what is intimate should not take place in public, this most sophisticated man echoed, however unconsciously (he would have been horrified to be told this), this literal realism. The Russians were in open revolt against the Italian opera of Paisiello, Cherubini, Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini. At long last the miserable crew of operatic purveyors showed signs of going under; but Verdi had breathed new life into the tradition and reconquered the musical public for the beastly *formula*, the mechanical succession of detachable operatic “numbers,” the bits and pieces which could be performed in any order, from, for example, the *Requiem*, with which Verdi and his singers toured Europe. They denounced all those self-contained arias, duets, trios, quintets, choruses, the inevitable apoggiaturas and artificially stuck-on cabalettas and cavatinas, the mechanism of the all too predictable orchestral accompaniment, the terrible hurdy-gurdy that killed the living expression of real experience. *Prince Igor* seemed to them spontaneous and “real,” whereas *Don Carlo* and *La Traviata* were Christmas trees decked out with meretricious baubles. Not that they liked Wagner any better—he seemed to them “a pompous disseminator of clamorous confusion,” to use Boito’s phrase. Serov, their colleague who admired and imitated this master, was duly drummed out of the nationalist regiment. Their gods were Liszt and Berlioz. The greatest enemy was always Verdi, upon whom they looked as the early German Romantics looked on the French arbiters of taste in the eighteenth century: shallow, pompous, stilted, artificial, utterly predictable, utterly worthless. Liszt and Berlioz were Rousseau—the return

to the colours and sounds of nature, to real individual feeling from the corrupt, commercialized sophistication of the standardized authors, Marivaux, Crébillon, Marmontel, above all, Voltaire, the dancing masters, with their powdered wigs and rhymed couplets and carefully contrived epigrams amid the bric à brac of the trivial and heartless *salons*.

This (as in the case of the Germans and the French a century earlier) was the attack of the *Sentimentalisch* on the *Naiv*: equally inevitable, perhaps, and equally exaggerated and wrongheaded. Verdi went his way, wounded, but ultimately serene and unperturbed. Doubtless he did not belong to the new world of Baudelaire, Flaubert, Liszt, Wagner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Mussorgsky. There is no reason to think that he was aware of this, or would have cared if he had been. He was the last great voice of humanism not at war with itself, at any rate in music.

No matter how sophisticated his scores, there is no trace, right to the end, of self-consciousness, neurosis, decadence. For that, in Italian music, we must wait for Boito, Puccini and their followers. He was the last master to paint with positive, clear, primary colours, to give direct expression to the eternal, major human emotions: love and hate, jealousy and fear, indignation and passion; grief, fury, mockery, cruelty, irony, fanaticism, faith, the passions that all men know. After him, this is much more rare. From Debussy onwards, whether music is impressionist or expressionist, neo-classical or neo-romantic, diatonic or chromatic, dodecaphonic, aleatoric or concrete, or a syncretism of these, innocence is gone.¹

To escape from the inflation and the appalling elephantiasis of late German romanticism, a variety of astringent, deflationary styles came into being. But the return to Bach or to Pergolesi, or to Gesualdo, or to Machaut, is a conscious attempt to look for antidotes. This has indeed generated much original and fascinating music, anti-*sentimentalisch*, and thereby itself *sentimentalisch*, inasmuch as it is self-regarding, self-conscious, doctrine-influ-

¹ There is a sense in which, for instance, Bruckner can be called naive. But that is the ordinary, not Schiller's, sense. In Schiller's sense of the word, Bruckner's visionary mysticism, the combination of sensuousness and effort at self-transcendence (as in the even acuter case of César Franck and the Schola Cantorum) is the deepest imaginable *Sentimentalität*. So is the very notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, with its striving for an unattainable integration of all the elements.

enced music, accompanied by theories and manifestoes, neo-Catholic (Solesmes), atonal, surrealist, socialist-realist (neo-diatonic), etc. to justify it. We expect ideological declarations, programmatic statements, anathemas from Wagner or Berlioz or Debussy or the Russian composers in the twentieth century. But just as we should have regarded a manifesto on the function of literature signed by Dickens or Dumas *père* as almost inconceivable, so a *profession de foi* by Verdi on the aesthetic or social significance of Italian opera or its relation to the *commedia dell'arte* (of the kind to be found in the writings of, say, Boito or Busoni) would rightly be suspected of being an exceptionally un-plausible forgery. Manifestoes are a symptom of revolt or reaction, personal or collective; that is to say, of an acute phase of "sentimentality." The remoteness of Verdi, who is so often and, in a sense, so justly described as one of the most deeply characteristic and representative artists of the nineteenth century, from this particular condition, which is usually held to be a central feature of that period—its typical *malaise*—is, perhaps, what is most arresting in his personality, both as an artist and as a man. In this respect he has no successors. In music at least, he is the last *naïve* artist of genius. The desire to "go back" to Verdi itself becomes a form of incurable nostalgia, of acutely non-Verdian "sentimentality," from which he was himself wholly and peacefully free.

It is natural enough that what during the high tide of the *sentimentalisch* movement, from, say, the eighteen-seventies to the nineteen-thirties, was looked upon both by the German and the anti-German (i.e. Franco-Russian) musical public (and its critics) as Verdi's popular, vulgar style, should have re-emerged during the last quarter-century, as the last direct voice of the great tradition. It is felt to be so in conscious contrast with the quest for the remote and the exotic—symptoms of recession, the desire to obtain comfort or derive new life from traditions remote in space and time—the music of the Middle Ages or of the Age of Reason, or the relics of the folk tradition in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and the islands of the Pacific.

Noble, simple, with a degree of unbroken vitality and vast natural power of creation and organization, Verdi is the voice of a world which is no more. His enormous popularity among the

most sophisticated as well as the most ordinary listeners today is due to the fact that he expressed permanent states of consciousness in the most direct terms: as Homer, Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Tolstoy have done. This is what Schiller called *naïv*. After Verdi this is not heard in music again. Verdi's assured place, in the high canon of the musical art, which nobody now disputes, is a symptom of sanity in our time. The sociology of this phenomenon, like that of Verdi's own position in his own time, is itself a fascinating topic, but not one with which I am qualified to deal.

Coming— in The Hudson Review

ALLEN TATE: *Poetry Modern
and Unmodern*

WILLIAM EMPSON: *Ben Jonson*

CHARLES TOMLINSON:
Translations from Octavio Paz

B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

IT WAS NOT SURPRISING TO READ, in an interview with Vladimir Ashkenazy (in *The Gramophone* of August 1967), that Rachmaninov was one of the older pianists who had influenced him; but one was surprised that someone impressed by Rachmaninov's highly charged melodramatics should have been influenced also by playing so anti-theatrical in its refinement, subtlety and elevation as Schnabel's. And one was dumbfounded that someone capable of appreciating these characteristics of Schnabel should have been impressed by the ostentatiously violent belaboring of music and instrument by Serkin, and should hear in it an "approach. . . so genuine and spiritual," and "interpretations [which carry] one to new regions of experience." But then one thought of Ashkenazy's own playing, and realized that it included nothing attributable to any of these older players: he had been impressed by what they did when he had listened to them; but when he sat down at the piano himself, his own remarkable musical intelligence and taste began to operate, and he did what they directed him to do.

Reading further, one was appalled to learn that a particular admiration for Serkin's performances of Beethoven's concertos was one of the reasons why he didn't record them himself—why, presumably, he hadn't recorded the superb performance of No. 3 two years ago, from which Serkin could have learned how to treat the piano and Beethoven's music. Equally appalling was the other reason: "With Beethoven and Mozart I feel at something of a disadvantage compared with someone like Daniel Barenboim who has been brought up in the classical Viennese tradition"—that Viennese tradition which has as much to do with Barenboim's playing as it had to do with the vastly different playing of Schnabel, or as the Texas tradition has with Cliburn's, the Toronto tradition with Gould's, the Moscow tradition with Ashkenazy's. The Viennese tradition is, I take it, a subject on which Barenboim has produced the kind of pretentious chatter he delivered at length about the concluding fugue of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata on a National Educational Television program a year ago; and on that program one got something worth listening to only in Ashkenazy's occasional sentence or two of gentle dissent. And if one sets Barenboim's recorded performance of Beethoven's Concerto No. 3 against Ashkenazy's performance two years ago, or Barenboim's recent recorded performances of Mozart's Concerto K.491 and Sonata K.576 against Ashkenazy's of the Concerto K.271, one hears that in Beethoven and Mozart Barenboim's knowing all about the Viennese tradition doesn't enable him to produce any-

thing like the superbly conceived and executed performances Ashkenazy produces with only his disciplined knowledge of how to play music on the piano—which Barenboim doesn't have. (Certainly, those recent Barenboim recorded performances of Mozart and Beethoven do, as I wrote in a review of them,

reveal pianistic and musical gifts, but . . . not the ultimate gift of the finished artist—the discipline that has those other gifts under control in an operation which produces an ordered, coherent conception of the musical work in his mind and an accurate realization of this conception from his instrument. Whereas in Cliburn's performance of the first movement of [Beethoven's Sonata] Op. 81a, once it starts, each note goes on to the next with unfailing continuity and cohesive tension and rightness of relation in what emerges as a completely imagined and completely realized integrated progression, from Barenboim one gets a progression without continuity, cohesive tension and integration.

What is true of Cliburn's performance of the Beethoven is true of Ashkenazy's of Mozart's Concerto K.271; whereas in Barenboim's performance of K.491 "a passage played with enlivening inflection is followed by one played as a lifeless pallid whisper; and even in a single phrase the force at the beginning is not sustained to the end.")

Fortunately Ashkenazy's awe of his inferiors doesn't keep him from playing in the concert hall; and there he shames his equals, Cliburn and Gould, by fulfilling the obligations of his powers as they do not—which is to say, by playing major works of the piano literature they leave unlearned. At his first recital in Carnegie Hall he played Schubert's posthumous Sonata in B-flat and Chopin's Etudes Op. 10 with Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7; in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Mozart's Adagio K.540, Schumann's Fantasy and Chopin's Barcarolle and Sonata Op. 58; in Philharmonic Hall, the Mozart and Schumann pieces and Beethoven's Sonata Op. 106 (*Hammerklavier*); in Hunter College, Beethoven's Sonatas Op. 27 No. 2 (the so-called *Moonlight*) and Op. 53 (*Waldstein*) and the Chopin Barcarolle and sonata. The independence I spoke of earlier was most striking in the performances of Schubert's B-flat and Beethoven's *Hammerklavier*, which were totally different from the authoritative Schnabel performances on records that I assume Ashkenazy must know. To begin with a small matter, he didn't follow Schnabel in the belief that the sacredness of the printed text extended even to the printer's errors, obliging one to play the clearly incorrect C-sharp in the fifth bar of the second movement of the Schubert: for Ashkenazy (as for Toscanini) errors in the text were something to correct, and he played the B that Schubert intended. More important, as against the occasional dramatic turbulence of Schnabel's performance of the first movement of the Schubert, Ashkenazy's maintained throughout the movement

the retrospectively reflective character of the opening statement, which he evidently, and correctly, regarded as establishing the tone of the movement. A performance so quiet of a movement so long and episodic incurred a risk of failure—i.e. of loss of interest; but he made it succeed with the sustained tension that caused it to hold the mind from first note to last. (The achievement was made even greater by an act of further deference to his inferiors—this time to the pedants who insist that the exposition in a sonata first movement must be repeated. One of their reasons is that if it isn't repeated we lose the important material of the first ending; but what would have been lost in this Schubert movement proved to be material jarring in its irrelevance and crudity, mechanically contrived by Schubert in deference to the pedants of his time.) Moreover, Ashkenazy carried over into the later movements something of the reflective character of the first; and this made his performances of these movements also different from Schnabel's—the second, for example, simpler, without Schnabel's prolonging of time values in an enlargement of the music's shape that enlarges its expressive dimensions. And the unified statement of the work that he produced was an excitingly impressive interpretive achievement.

In Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* too the sacredness of the printed text extends for Schnabel to the metronome marking that makes the first movement a frenetic rush which he cannot even execute clearly; but Ashkenazy didn't follow him in this "mistaken form of piety," as Tovey characterized it, and instead found the tempo in which he could articulate and shape the movement in what emerged as the most effective statement of it in my experience. In the slow movement his simpler playing again did not achieve the expressive enlargement that Schnabel's achieves with its expansiveness in time, but it did give the long movement unfailing coherence and expressive eloquence. And I have never heard the concluding fugue given the clarity of texture and structure Ashkenazy gave it.

On the other hand his performance of the Chopin sonata in the Brooklyn Academy and Hunter College adhered to tradition in the impassioned character and rubato style of the opening movement—which is to say that Ashkenazy, like everyone except Cliburn, evidently had not paid heed to the *maestoso* in the direction *Allegro maestoso*; had therefore not perceived, as Cliburn did, the true expressive character of the movement, not impassioned but retrospectively reflective; and did not, therefore, perform it, as Cliburn did, in the spacious and grand style that gave it this expressive character. What must be added is that in his traditional performance Ashkenazy operated of course with his unfailing musical taste; and this was true also of his similarly traditional performance of the Schumann Fantasy in the Brooklyn Academy and Philharmonic Hall.

I have written all this because Ashkenazy's playing provides some of

the most treasurable musical experiences one can have today. Only the first of his recitals was reviewed in *The New York Times*; and Harold Schonberg brought to it the mind that is too occupied with what Bernard Shaw called "the stale rubbish of the musical book-makers"—some of it in Schonberg's own books—to be able to do the critic's job of hearing and reporting accurately the particular things that happen in a particular pianist's particular performance. The Schonberg critical operation was defined for me once by the review of two recorded performances of a Schubert sonata which presented to Schonberg the striking difference between Wührer's simple, dull playing and Kempff's constant fussing with tempo and phrase: "Kempff and Wührer are pianists very much in the same style. Both exhibit the Teutonic style of playing; both work in broad, massive strokes"—which actually neither did. Schonberg's concern as a reviewer is still with placing the pianist or conductor or singer in non-existent relations with others in such "styles," "traditions" and "schools." Last year he wrote that Fischer-Dieskau's *Lieder*-singing was "of the Elena Gerhardt school"; in a review of his recent book on conductors I learn of the "Austro-German tradition" of the completely dissimilar Furtwängler, Klemperer and von Karajan, of the "French school," noted for "logic rather than high emotion," that includes the frenzied Munch. And Ashkenazy's straightforward, unmannered performances of Chopin's Etudes in Carnegie Hall elicited the strange statement that "the Russian school of piano playing is still romantically oriented . . . and Ashkenazy triumphed." But then it turned out that the romanticism with which Ashkenazy had approached the pieces had been special—"a kind of controlled romanticism; controlled technically, controlled emotionally," producing straightforward rhythms and the absence of the "pronounced rubato [of] the older generation." On the other hand, in the quietly reflective performance of Schubert's sonata Schonberg heard the approach of one "who had given great thought to its architecture . . . and had pondered every dynamic relationship. . . . Every note was carefully weighted, every phrase tidy." But as a result "spontaneity was lacking," and Ashkenazy was "a little boring in his determined perfection. After a while one longed for . . . a wrong note, even an error in taste. Anything. But nothing ever happened. And that was the trouble." And I am spared the trouble of commenting on this by an exchange between two women during the intermission of the Brooklyn Academy recital: "Harold Schonberg said in *The Times* that his playing was too perfect, that it needed some wrong notes." "Oh, but he is still young!"

The young American pianist Michael Rogers, playing in Carnegie Hall, offered another disciplined operation of remarkable technical and musical powers in his performances of Schubert's Impromptus Op. 90 No. 3 and Op. 142 No. 4, Beethoven's Sonata Op. 109,

Bartók's Etudes, Copland's Piano Variations and Schumann's Symphonic Etudes. The Copland work was stated with a structural power and an intensity I don't recall in any previous performance; but the bleakness of the music kept this from being the treasurable experience some of Rogers' other performances were. One of these was the very first, the marvelous realization of the now dreamily reflective, now impassioned Schubert Impromptu Op. 90 ("a bit bland," said the *Times* reviewer; "the melodies murmured instead of sang"); and others were those of the Schumann work, particularly the quiet dialogue of the two voices in Variation 9, and the great concluding variation movement of the Beethoven sonata. And though the *vivace ma non troppo* opening of the first movement of the sonata was taken *troppo vivace* for its substance to be heard clearly, the *adagio* proclamatory second subject was enunciated with a dis-tending tension and power that made it tremendous (a "nicely poised reading" which "here and there lacked the boldly outlined phrase that adds emotional weight," said the *Times* man).

As unexpected as Haydn's extraordinary writing in the middle movements of his Piano Trios No. 11 in A-flat and No. 4 in E, at a New School concert, was the electrifying playing of the piano's variation in the one, and its florid aria in the second, by a young pianist named Murray Perahia. But his playing was impressive throughout the performances with Alexander Schneider, whose violin-playing had a little less than its former vitality, and the excellent cellist Robert Sylvester.

Hearing the Guarneri Quartet's performances of Beethoven's Quartets Op. 18 No. 3, Op. 95 and Op. 131, Mozart's K.464 and Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* at the YM-YWHA—performances wholly and satisfyingly right in musical conception, marvelous in ensemble execution—one could imagine one was hearing the Budapest Quartet's performances in that hall thirty years ago. And the similarity extended to the effect of the hall's acoustics—of dulling the luster which the Guarneri's tone had had in Sanders Theater, Cambridge.

A welcome opportunity to hear Haydn's *The Creation*—the amazingly imaginative orchestral writing of the introductory representation of chaos, the beautiful vocal writing that follows—was provided by the second of the two concerts of Karl Richter's Munich Bach Choir and Orchestra that opened Carnegie Hall's season. This work, and Bach's B-Minor Mass at the first concert, benefitted by Richter's enlivening pacing and shaping, and by the excellent singing and playing he got from his chorus and orchestra—notably the solo horn, Hermann Baumann, whose ability to produce with his instrument the beautiful phrases he did in the aria "*Quoniam tu solus sanctus*" of the Mass was nothing less than phenomenal. The solo tenor and bass were adequate; but the soprano and alto had unattractive voices; and this didn't make the uninteresting music they were given to sing by Bach much of the time easier to take.

Illness prevented Stravinsky from conducting L'Orchestre National Français in his Symphony of Psalms, at one of Carnegie Hall's International Festival of Visiting Orchestras concerts; and Jean Martinon took over not only this work but *Le Sacre du Printemps* and a recent piece, *Requiem Canticles*, which were to have been conducted by Robert Craft. Martinon conducted them well; and his learning and conducting the difficult *Canticles*—in which the Rutgers University Choir sang with the orchestra—at such short notice was an impressive achievement. The piece is in the idiom of Stravinsky's recent years, which I find unmeaningful.

Opera began with the New York City Opera's fall season. I gave myself a second look at Beni Montresor's enchanting stage production of *The Magic Flute*; and heard a new Queen of the Night, Rita Shane, who managed her difficult arias adequately, a new and good Papageno, David Smith, a new Sarastro, Georg Schnakpka, whose bass lacked the necessary weight, and with these again the tremulous-voiced Pamina of Veronica Tyler and coarse-voiced Tamino of Michel Molese. In Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or* the company reverted to normal with one of its pretentiously novel and appallingly inept stage productions—this one devised by Tito Capobianco, with scenery by Ming Cho Lee. The singing of Norman Treigle as King Dodon, Beverly Sills as the Queen of Shemakha and Enrico di Giuseppe as the Astrologer was good.

No one has contended that the paintings of Constable must be repainted in a contemporary style, or the novels of Jane Austen rewritten, to make them interesting to the public of today; but the designer-director teams who have in recent years inflicted on operas the monstrosities of staging that would make the works unrecognizable to their creators *have* contended that these were necessary to make the works valid for present-day audiences. The latest occasion for this contention is the Metropolitan Opera's new production of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, with scenery designed by Günther Schneider-Siemsen and costumes by George Wakhevitch for the staging by the conductor von Karajan. "Our work," said Schneider-Siemsen in the Metropolitan program, "and the work of *Neu-Bayreuth* have the same goal, which is to build a bridge into the future, in order that Wagner and his work be preserved for future audiences. . . . Because of the increased speed of living, contemporary man has lost his ability for endurance and patience. He tends to criticize Wagner . . . for the length of his operas." And "the public's interest . . . can be aroused again through the use of optical means of expression in the theatre." But actually "contemporary man" includes those who love Wagner's *Ring* operas and those who, like myself, dislike them; what the ones love, and the others dislike, is the music; those who love the music have done so when they have heard it with conventional

stage productions and even, on records, with no stage productions at all, and do not need the drastic innovations of contemporary staging to persuade them to continue to do so; and those who dislike the music do not do so because of the conventional staging with which they have heard it, and will not be persuaded to like it by the "updated" staging Schneider-Siemsen advocates. In this actual situation the justification of such a staging—whether Wieland Wagner's at Bayreuth or the Schneider-Siemsen-Karajan *Walküre* at the Metropolitan—can be solely that it makes the opera work more effectively than a staging which executes Wagner's specifications.

In his superb little book on opera production, *The Ring at Bayreuth*, Victor Gollancz stated his general rule that the style of production must "help in realising the musical-dramatic intention of the work," and conversely that the producer "must never so obtrude his visualities (things seen on the stage) as deliberately to focus a preponderance of attention upon them"—which implied that some "visualities" *had* been intended to focus attention on themselves. In the Metropolitan program for *Die Walküre* the synopsis of scenes read "Act 1 Hunding's hut"—this in accordance with Wagner's text, which states further that in the center of the room there is a large tree, that the fire in the fireplace throws its light on the hilt of a sword thrust into the tree, that there is an adjoining room from which Sieglinde emerges and into which Hunding retires, and that there are doors at the back which, near the end of the act, spring open and reveal the moonlit spring night that Siegmund sings about. I cannot imagine what Schneider-Siemsen would contend the act gained by having the rising curtain reveal not the room Wagner specifies but only an enormous tree standing in dark space, and having the act performed in the hollowed-out base of this tree—specifically what it gained by there being no fireplace, no fire, no adjoining room, no doors at the back. What I do know is what the act lost by all this, and the damage inflicted by the "visuality" of the kind Gollancz described—the spectacular tree which at once drew the attention to itself that I think was its real purpose, and continued to distract one with thoughts of its evident deficiencies for the requirements of Wagner's work and the absurdities it asked one to accept.

The Metropolitan program placed Act 2 in "a wild, rocky pass"; but the rising curtain revealed a narrow platform curving around the front of the stage in the form of a ring. This was another distracting "visuality"; but beyond this distraction and that of seeing Wotan and Fricka berate each other from two widely separated points on the platform, the scene didn't lose anything—though it didn't gain anything either. Then the ring dissolved and was replaced by other constructions on the darkened and misty stage; and having Brünnhilde, in the later performance I attended, become visible to Siegmund in a circle of light high above him (in the first performances

she could not be seen) from which she continued to address him, gave this confrontation in the *Todesverkündigung* an impressive effect it hadn't had when she had walked onto the stage. But at the end of the act, in Siegmund's combat with Hunding high at the back, Siegmund's sword was struck from his hand by a dazzling shaft of light, which was effective certainly, but no more so than what Wagner specifies here: the sudden appearance of Wotan, who breaks Siegmund's sword with his spear, to the words "*Zurück vor dem Speer; das Schwert in Stücken*", which I don't think were sung at the Metropolitan. Moreover, Wagner's action continues effectively by having Wotan remain between the fallen Siegmund and the standing Hunding, whom he annihilates with a gesture of his hand, telling him to inform Fricka that she has been avenged by Wotan's spear; but at the Metropolitan Wotan, after the shaft of light had enabled Hunding to kill Siegmund, appeared ineffectively at one side of the stage, where he made the gesture that killed Hunding high at the back, and made the statement about his spear that was belied by what one had seen happen. This scene suffered a loss.

On the other hand, in the third act the ring in combination with a central construction that rose to Brünnhilde's high rock created the prescribed "summit of a rocky mountain" and worked effectively with the action.

It wasn't only interest in the updated stage production that brought me to my first performance of *Die Walküre* since the one that opened the Metropolitan's season of 1936-37: it also provided my first experience of von Karajan's conducting of opera in the opera house. And the mere technical operation exceeded that of even the greatest conductors at the Metropolitan in the last fifty years—men like Bruno Walter, Beecham, Fritz Busch. At the incredible age of twenty Bernard Shaw was able to perceive the "highest faculty of a conductor" to be "the establishment of a magnetic influence under which an orchestra becomes as amenable to the *bâton* as a pianoforte to the fingers"; and no one since Toscanini has established the magnetic influence over the Metropolitan orchestra, and got from it the playing, that von Karajan did in *Die Walküre*. As for his conception of the work, it was criticized after the first performance for its excessive understatement of the first act and parts of the second; but the understatement I heard at the later performance I attended, though untraditional, worked convincingly—even in the beginning of the final duet of the first act, which is usually and justifiably made a rapturously sonorous outburst, but which was very effective as held down by von Karajan. Moreover, this quiet playing flowed with marvelous sensitiveness, with unfailing continuity and cohesive tension, and with extraordinary clarity of texture. And where greater power was called for, von Karajan produced it. He had previously shown himself to be the possessor of remarkable powers that he used erratically and capriciously; but on this Saturday afternoon he operated with unfailing

responsibility to his task, and achieved a performance that was an unforgettable demonstration of technical and musical mastery.

It remains to report that in his understated first act he had the benefit of the ear-ravishing *mezza-voce* singing of Jon Vickers, whose lustrous tenor voice is as unique today as Bjoerling's was in his time. And in the second act he had Christa Ludwig, whose Fricka provided a briefer demonstration of the extraordinary powers as a singing actress that she revealed in last year's Ortrud. On the other hand, the unpleasant voice of Régine Crespin, the Sieglinde, was not one to enjoy hearing with Vickers'; Thomas Stewart was no more than an acceptable Wotan; and while the power and steadiness and accuracy of Birgit Nilsson's voice satisfied important requirements of Brünnhilde, its lack of warmth and luster and its basically unattractive timbre made her performance less than satisfying, especially to someone who remembered Flagstad's.

When Thomas Scherman's Concert Opera Association performed Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* a couple of years ago there was the possibility that the impression the work gave of being one of Donizetti's routine, mechanical exercises of his style had been caused by the poor quality of the principals' voices and the characterless singing and playing, under Scherman's direction, of music which required sensitive articulating and shaping of its phrases to give it character and expressive effect. But the American Opera Society's performance of the work this year had Montserrat Caballé's distinguished singing in the title role; and even with the less good singing of the other principals—Shirley Verrett, who, in the attempt to make Elisabetta (Queen Elizabeth) imposing and formidable, forced her powerful contralto voice to the point of strong vibrato and harshness; and Edoardo Gimeñez, who brought a pallid tenor voice and style to the role of Leicester—there was this time no doubt that the work was the routine and mechanical one it had seemed to be two years ago.

One of the rare moments of truth in Clive Barnes's silly chatter about ballet in *The Times* was a statement about the Harkness Ballet after one of the performances of its first New York season at the Broadway Theater—that "it remains perhaps a company of splendid dancers in search of a splendid ballet." At the two performances I attended I did see splendid dancers—Elizabeth Carroll, Helgi Tomasson, Lawrence Rhodes, among others—but did not see them in even one splendid ballet. The one piece I found moderately enjoyable was *Zealous Variations* by the company's director, Brian Macdonald—a Balanchine-like dance ballet to music of Schubert; but Macdonald's invention in *Tchaikovsky* was much feebler; and the *Firebird* he devised for the entire 1910 Stravinsky score was appallingly bad. So were, in their different ways, Agnes de Mille's *Golden Age*, John Butler's *Sebastian* and Alvin Ailey's *Feast of Ashes*.

Mrs. Rebekah Harkness seems to have had the idea, when she founded the company, that one needed only to assemble "choreographers, composers, designers and dancers" and provide a place for them to "participate in coordinated programs to create new works for the ballet stage," for works to result that would be as deserving of the public's attention as Balanchine's. One could have told her at the start that this result would be achieved only if her choreographers had powers of the magnitude of Balanchine's; and similarly, concerning her idea that her company would be giving young choreographers the opportunity for development that alone could produce additional Balanchines, one could have told her that the opportunity would produce this result only if it was given to people with initial gifts to develop like those Balanchine had started with. One could also have pointed out that there was no situation requiring this intervention of hers: not only were there established choreographers, a few gifted, most not, producing ballets for the existing companies, but they were being joined by young newcomers; and there was no reason to think we were losing the achievements of genius, old or young, for lack of the opportunities Mrs. Harkness was setting out to provide. One could have told her all this, and have predicted that her course of action would produce the dismal results that were exhibited at the Broadway Theater this year. But she doesn't seem to be someone whom this would have dissuaded from doing what she had decided to do.

New works by both established choreographers and young newcomers were presented in the two-week season at New York City Center that American Ballet Theater devoted to contemporary works. Antony Tudor's *Echoing of Trumpets* was concerned with the suffering inflicted by brutal conquering soldiers on the women of a village devastated by war; and whereas for Clive Barnes the work presented "agony poetically realized" and was "Tudor at its greatest," for me its movements of brutal violence were nothing more than just that, and made the work one of Tudor's worst. In Kenneth MacMillan's *Danses Concertantes*, a dance piece using the Stravinsky score, bits of cuteness were scattered throughout the uninteresting choreography produced by the mere ability to put movements together that made MacMillan a choreographer analogous to the composer with the mere ability to put sounds together. But far worse was his invention for the dramatic ballet *Las Hermanas*, with its clichés—for the tyrannical Spanish mother, the sex-starved oldest daughter, the sexually formidable seducer—that were laughable caricatures of themselves, its lurid sexual encounters, its incoherence that became farcical.

Young Eliot Feld, whose first ballet last year, *Harbinger*, was a dance piece with a lively first movement that was very good, this year offered one, *At Midnight*, with serious meaning—a meaning not derived from the Rückert songs of Mahler that it used. In the opening episode, to the song *At Midnight*, a half-naked man was manipu-

lated by a group of other men in what could well have been the "[delineation of] the agony of man" that Clive Barnes took it to be; with the lovely song *Ich atmet' einen Lindenduft* came a *pas de deux*, apparently of two lovers; with the great song *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* a male dancer mooned about the stage in modern-dance-style movements which Barnes took to be those of the "alienated 20th century hero, the Outsider"; and with the repeated *Ich atmet' einen Lindenduft* the young couple reappeared, while not only the male dancer but a female dancer mooned about in those modern-dance movements, to show the "solitary poet . . . threading his way, comprehending an uncomprehending life, and constantly missing fulfillment with poetic grandeur." The *pas de deux* to the second song I found charming; the rest didn't work for me.

The Catherine Wheel, the first work for Ballet Theater of another of its young dancers, Michael Smuin, was for the most part a series of *pas de deux* strung on a dramatic idea taken from Schnitzler's *Reigen*; and for the most part the invention had freshness and was enjoyable to watch.

Last year it was the great performances of the great new production of *Swan Lake* which Barnes imagined he saw that gave Ballet Theatre the role and purpose of "bringing the best out of the past into American ballet"; this year it was the fascinating new repertory and excellent dancers of the two-week season that established Ballet Theatre, "for ten years or more the meek Number Two to New York City Ballet," as "now in its own right and in its own way a simply marvelous company." My eyes saw only the excellent dancers—among them Veronica Mlakar, Susan Casey, Christine Sarry, Eliot Feld, Edward Verso, Michael Smuin, William Glassman.

As for the New York City Ballet this season, I can report only on the first of Balanchine's new works, *Glinkiana*—four delightful fun pieces to music of Glinka, their humor added to by Esteban Frances, the only first-rate stage designer among those Balanchine works with nowadays. His single set framed four small backdrops which provided the four scenes for Balanchine's pieces: a French lower-class place of entertainment, for a piece, to Glinka's Polka, which poked fun at the kind of dance one would see there, and in which Violette Verdy gave a marvelous take-off of the dancer who would perform it; a romantic scene, for a setting of Valse Fantasie in which Mimi Paul took one's breath away with her exquisitely pointed-up dancing, and a new young soloist, John Clifford, dazzled one with his quick and sharp but contained ebullience; a Spanish scene, for a piece, to Jota Aragonesa, which poked fun at the Spanish style, and in which Melissa Hayden's operation in that style was very funny; and finally another romantic scene, but this one with a statue of a rearing white horse that provided a comic counterpoint for the romantic *pas de deux*, to Divertimento Brillante on themes of Bellini, that Patricia McBride and Edward Villella danced deadpan.

VERNON YOUNG

London Film Chronicle: Variation on a Personal Theme

THE ESSENTIAL REASON FOR MY NOT being able to live in my native country permanently is my inability to confront, without pain, the changes which are overwhelming it: the grossly erupting skyline of London; the dying villages replaced by a neo-urban contempt for the organically created settlements; the leaden drift towards socialism; the stilted efforts of intellectuals to be liberal by standing on their own necks; the frightening, if admirable, good humour with which everyone is prepared to tighten his belt again, stand in line and act the deferred life in obedience to one more political promise; and the brittle indifference towards historically grounded sentiment expressed by the not-exactly-young and, it would seem, not-exactly-educated who represent the influential forces. Nowhere more than in England do I feel as if I were on a great ocean liner going down with all lights blazing, while every passenger repeats, over his penultimate whisky-and-soda, "And a jolly good thing, too!" It's distressing to watch a decent people liquidating itself—sadness behind their eyes but the chin still dauntless. Set me down almost anywhere in north-continental Europe and I'm happy. But in England, as rationally as I try to conquer the feeling, I remain melancholy beneath whatever positive pleasure of the hour I may be receiving. In Ulm, Nuremberg, Bremen or Rotterdam I am *intellectually* aware of comparable changes in the climate and precisely familiar with the literal damage suffered between 1940 and 1945. But I am not personally identified with the consequences. On native soil, where a genuine foreigner accepts any phenomenon as an exotic and reassuring instance of the eternal England he has gleaned from Wordsworth, Dickens or Winston Churchill, I have just memory enough for shocks of recognition, insufficient to feel confidently related. I have lived for too long in too many other places; when in England I entertain assumptions for which I have no sanction from a living status and I soon feel like Peter Schlemiel—the man who cast no shadow.

My notes tell me that I was deeply shaken by Peter Watkins' first film, *The War Game*:

It is unlikely that anyone else will succeed in compressing the end of the world into fifty more disturbing minutes of film . . . the

blighted human face, children and animals singed, maimed, denaturalized in a matter of seconds, the impinging smaller terrors, the tyrannical grief of people you thought you hated yesterday. . . . If the moral nature of scientific man has brought us to this—death by fire or, worse, by slow voiding of the body liquid and erosion of the bone—better to die now. . . . London still stood when I came from the theatre. Invulnerability is the greatest of our illusions.

High praise, no doubt, for the immediacy of Watkins' film; yet some months later I feel no compulsion to recommend *The War Game* as the greatest story ever anticipated. More than one critic has been tempted to believe that a film which acutely treats the most important subject of our time—for which subject has priority over our fear of total extinction?—must necessarily be the most important film of our time. The logic of the heart deceives them. Disaster is always affective to the quick imagination. Turn on the radio, pick up the newspaper, put your ear to the ground; you'll have your fill of terror, if you insist. *What's the meaning of all song? Let all things pass away.* But the human mind is protected from paralyzing inconsequence by a recuperative mechanism which fanatics mistakenly call indifference. We've always thought the world was going to end: when we fell out of love, when the first sirens sounded, when we lay dying in a hospital bed. One day it will. Until then we gain no greater glory than by *living*, as gratefully (and as gracefully) as we are able. *Try to be one of those on whom nothing is lost.* As for *The War Game*, to be quite honest; I have all but forgotten it, so soon after my quaking response to it in London—which neither invalidates the film as a compelling documentary nor removes for a minute the dire possibility it prophesies. Watkins' method is almost too effectively impersonal, the brilliant simulation of crucial actuality as if caught in the flying present by a TV crew. But a newsreel, because it's *true*, has no such durable hold on the imagination as a work of art.

All the same, two films by Peter Watkins helped to intensify the probably morbid gratitude with which, even under daily rain, I re-experienced that city where so many monuments to eloquence and courage have been preserved and where, after the worst has been said of him, your man on the street is civil and self-disciplined, to a degree unmatched, I am convinced, elsewhere. I had to ask myself, upon seeing *Privilege* for the second time—could the people I saw around me in the pubs, the undergrounds and the museums be herded into the abject condition Watkins obviously feared when he made that film? Were they self-disciplined or docile? Had they been so conditioned to queuing up—for postwar rations, buses, cinema tickets—that they could be forced to stand in that ultimate queue where the most substantial liberties are surrendered? I didn't believe they could. Conceivably I didn't *want* to believe so. Of course, the first weakness of that film, as of all such, is that we are required to accept the premise,

the *fait accompli*. We are asked to infer an international crisis so terrible as to break the English nerve. It has never before been broken—not to the root. But a breed is dying out and the new breed hasn't been tested. I'd like to pin my faith on the native kindness and on the preponderance of intelligence over imagination (a virtue in life, a hindrance in art) that distinguishes British empiricism. Against panic in the bowels and pressure from the pimps, however, kindness and intelligence may have no more weight than the barking of a dog. . . . This time around, *Privilege* seemed most cogent when it pegged the social flunkies, cross-biters and pandars—Levantine or Protestant—who run Show Business and who, Watkins imagines, may be running England, before 1984 is in sight, with the alarmed assistance of a fearful coalition establishment.

The two "British" films of the past year which have most suggestively rendered a sense of the English past, *A Man For All Seasons* and *Accident*¹ (the latter by indirection, for I don't believe Harold Pinter gives a damn for the English past), have been directed by foreigners. (Zinneman is Viennese, by way of Hollywood; Losey is American.) I revisited *A Man For All Seasons* with special affection: quite simply, it is riches for the eye and ear. (And suspect by the purist, for it's lifted from a play and what would it be without the spoken language of the original—especially as spoken by Paul Scofield?) Before all, it has a subject, one so irreducible as to appear archaic in the window-dressing of today's cinema: a man's conscience—that *charming, conversable, infinite thing, the intensest thing we know*. Zinneman translated Robert Bolt's discursive tragedy into the moving, often radiant, likeness of an age when the lyric and the axe shared the same domain, when the language and the architecture of men went far to minimize the cruelty with which they lived. I find that I'm on relative grounds, however. Anglo-Americans and/or Catholics may be counted on to enjoy this film; elsewhere, and the more so where the English tongue can't be savoured, boredom sets in. More than one Swede, for example, told me that he thought Sir Thomas "foolish." Foolish because he was Old Church, no doubt, and sixteenth-century casuistry is irrelevant to "our problems." Where security is the sole value, I suppose that a man who prefers to die rather than acknowledge a butcher with an itch for a new bedfellow as supreme head of the realm under Christ must indeed appear foolish! A question remains: would they have been as bored by a film about Martin Luther?

One of the two period films made by *Englishmen* which in November had newly arrived on the London screens was Richard Burton's embarrassment (to me, if not to him), Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. This bewildering movie was impetuously undertaken (that it could have

¹ Reviewed in THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. XX, No. 4 (Winter, 1967-68), p. 648.

been engendered in cold blood I'll never believe) on the basis of a staged experiment by the Oxford Theatre Society, in which the visiting celebrity had a vested interest. Instead of leaving well enough alone (benefit of doubt given), Burton made a film, retaining himself in the title role and adding to the depressingly camp performances of the students a lab-full of cinematic trickery, gauche sound effects, meretricious colour—and his wife. If Burton had shown the film first to a dependable chum, he might have been told, "Quite interesting, old boy, but you're not going to release the damn thing to the public, are you?" I should prefer to assume that Burton would then have had sufficient self-respect to get the point. Since he did in fact release the damn thing, one is led to credit him with a pathetic wish to protest that if he were not so susceptible to the Hollywood-International *dolce vita* he might have become our leading rhetorical actor. In *Dr. Faustus* the formerly rich elocution is perfunctory and the camera inconsiderately magnifies a bloated face and an absent eye. Less tolerable than this: because Marlowe's play is a better argument than any by Shakespeare for Lamb's objection to staging Elizabethan drama—it takes place only in the ear—special genius was called for (which in Burton's case he has not got) to invent credible settings. Those attempted suggest a TV complex for Dr. Jekyll's laboratory, sufficiently mobile for simultaneous invasion by sound and camera units. Marlowe's space-time is bounded in a nutshell. Roman Polanski's designer was infinitely more inspired when planning the delightfully inane scenography of *The Fearless Vampire Killers*. *Dr. Faustus* is hereby included with the classic errors of film-making: with, for instance, Sergei Bondachuk's *Othello*, the Orson Welles *Macbeth* (not *his Othello* which was, whatever else, supreme film art) and Gustaf Gründgens' version of the Goethe *Faust* he had previously staged in Hamburg. Nor is the Burton film redeemed, I am not reluctant to add, by the presence of Elizabeth Taylor in several stages of undress as *das ewige weibliche*. Mercifully, she is not called upon to speak. For one appearance she is held together with gold dust, for another by what looked like an over-all clay pack. However encased, she is, of course, imperturbable. When Burton-Faustus asked, "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?", I was quite prepared to lead the audience in a choral rejoinder—"Not bloody likely!"

John Schlesinger has affirmed the steady indifference of British filmmakers to the tradition of their nature poetry in the very act of trying to mend the indifference with a stereoscopic, giant-screen production of *Far From the Madding Crowd*. He has brought forth a blockbuster: which may not be entirely to his discredit if you consider that any more suitable director than he might well be defeated by the plain fact that Thomas Hardy wrote novels with all the structural elements of a blockbuster. They had a great deal more. They had nobility of

theme (the failing struggle of thought to transcend instinct) and they had at their best a live-oak tenure in the soil, a sentient, if stoical response to the moods of weather and season which, among other things, one waits for in vain during the tedious passage of Schlesinger's movie. A female writer in *Vogue* described Nicholas Roeg's photography as "exquisite." I can see that with the new tide of colour we shall get as many unfounded judgements on that property of film as we've ever had on acting or on the "real subject." Far from being exquisite, Roeg's camera work is conventional. The first sight of the sky in this film should convince anyone but a mole that he has little better to expect thereafter than views to reward the easily gluttoned tourist. No such sky ever existed. Schlesinger and Roeg have assembled an attractive facsimile of England in the age of the shire, the sheepwalk, Kersey cloth and the resident landlord, but we never hear stirrings in the grass or sense the earth turning as the wind wears down stones, bevels the Downs and deforms the gesture of a tree. To film Hardy without this sense is like conducting Sibelius without hearing wolves in the distance. (To be fair, who with such a sense would have freedom to express it on an MGM high-budget schedule?)

Once, the film comes truly alive and close to the under-skin of Hardy: when Sergeant Troy "woos" Bathsheba by showing off his sabre ritual in a cleft of hills denuded of any other human trace. Schlesinger here captures the spirit and the topography of an authentic Hardy moment, the vital impassivity of nature mocking egoistic concerns: treeless mounds rumble away oceanically, the silly skillful man, a child and cad, demonstrates to a frozen, fascinated female the cut-and-thrust, the feint, the parry, the charge, the razor-sharp kill. Terence Stamp is largely responsible for the concentrated interest of this scene; he was born to play Sergeant Troy—which is, I fear, no compliment. When all is done, any conviction that animates this film, wherein every shot is given equal value with the next, comes from the actors (just as in the Hardy novels, this one included, we are held by our curiosity about the characters, while outraged by the situations they get themselves into). I said the actors; I mean the *men*: besides Stamp, Peter Finch and Alan Bates, each playing a suitor endowed with an unreasonable degree of forbearance. I don't know what Julie Christie (Bathsheba) was doing in this film. But then, bless her, I don't know what she's doing in any film. As the big-sister girl of Billy Liar she was briefly the apt thing. As a lady farmer of early Victorian England she is no more feasible than she was as an international whore in *Darling*. Always I have the feeling that she missed her vocation by saying No to that job as an airline hostess.

England is suffering, more perhaps than any European country, for having failed to educate—or at least to *accommodate*—its urban lower classes. Since the days of Hardy's novel and the Industrial Revolution,

there has existed a static mass that resists all but economic change, a mass amenable to organization but utterly incurious otherwise. Proud of its own inertia, it wages class warfare passively by refusing all higher interests on the grounds that they're the property of a higher class. As the upper levels, economically supported, break down, the art of being English becomes to a large extent histrionic, for it consists, to begin with, in maintaining a style consonant with the social level one is born to; failing that, with the level from which one has fallen or to which one aspires. To be *without* a social level is nominally not to exist! From this perspective, the "Mods" are *reactionary*; contemporary only in their lingo, they represent a kind of Underground Restoration, with nothing to restore but their lack of identity. They have rejected their grandfathers as well as their fathers and returned, sartorially at least, to the era of the Four Georges, in the pitiful hope that a change of costume will confer a change of rank. Many who fail to rise in the English social scale and cannot live at the level to which circumstance or education have restricted them form a lunatic fringe on which they survive by self-delusion. Taking up an anti-social position, they secretly harbour social pretensions.

The old, indigent woman in Bryan Forbes's marvelous film, *The Whisperers*, converts her lifetime of servitude into one of authority; her deadbeat, cadging husband, a ferret in the social landscape, insists on the pose of a respectable man down on his luck. Bryan Forbes made *The Whisperers* with production money raised by two young Americans and personally supplied the bleak scenario (from a novel by R. Nicholson) that recounts the daily paranoid existence of old Mrs. Ross who, long since deserted by her husband and son, lives (in appalling poverty) by the grace of Social Assistance, to which she writes politely condescending letters explaining that as soon as her estate is settled she will no longer need the back of their hand. She hears conspiratorial whispers in the pipes, in the water-taps, behind the walls, outside the windows. They are the only company she has and all the company she needs: the only whisperers to whom she can talk back without incurring the troublesome responses of a reality her mind refuses to face. By strict standards she is mad. Yet there's a fine edge to her madness; it supplies her with a performance, large as one way of life, which most people have agreed to indulge. An Assistance official who alone has taken a personal, guardian interest in this old ruin knows that in truth she spent her years as a domestic in the homes of the well-to-do: hence her refinement of diction, her marchioness deportment, her innocence of the relationship between cause and effect, her genuinely fatigued civility when exposed to logic, to verbal abuse or physical violence. . . . For two thirds of the film, Dame Edith Evans carries nearly the whole expressive burden, meeting triumphantly that difficult challenge to the vanity of an actress—appearing to forget all she ever knew about acting. During the last third she is assisted, su-

perbly, by Eric Portman as Archie, the recreant husband imposed on her, with every good intention and no good result, by Social Assistance. Forbes sustains the tone of his depressing subject with such frugal accuracy that I expect the film will be a financial disaster. Some masterpieces of naturalism are too successfully conveyed for anyone to assimilate with more pleasure than pain. *Umberto D* took five years to reach New York; exhibitors believed it would drive people out of the cinema. And I was never able to persuade anyone to see *The Real End of the War* (Kawelorowicz, Poland) after outlining the content for them. (I should keep my big mouth shut.)

The England of Forbes's film is that of the industrial Midlands, once on a time covered by forest but long ago given over to "the dark Satanic mills," grimy red-brick homes, grey chapels of the Dissenting Sects, rubbishy side-streets and draughty pubs—the back lots of a great society. There are acres of living ugliness in beautiful England which no sane man can excuse and no hopeful man can expect to see greatly improved. A talent for theatre the English have in abundance; the talent for building seems to have been lost in them forever.

JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

THE SEASON, ON AND OFF BROADWAY, has been somewhat better than those of recent memory, but the irony of it is that with such a "better" to complain about, who needs a worse? Upon examination, the current good does not contain a single serious American play; and the repertory companies, to which we keep looking for sustenance, have let us down even worse than usual.

By far the most satisfying event of the season so far has been Michael Cacoyannis's production of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, even if the entire cast does insist on mispronouncing the protagonist's name. This presentation at the Circle in the Square accomplishes something on the order of squaring the circle: justice done to a Greek tragedy by an American production. It is far superior to Cacoyannis's previous attempt at *The Trojan Women*; by chastening his style, the Greek director has achieved both heightened functionalism and greater dignity. The chorus, today, is an impossibility, no matter how one approaches it;

but, at least, its gyrations here pertain more to modern dance than to academic antiquarianism or Disney's *Fantasia*.

The action is not kept frenetically moving as if the words could not carry it forward; though there are sequences through which the actors strut or stalk one another a mite overzealously, many others remain uncluttered with needless bustle. The play is profoundly and variously relevant to our times—it contains enough, in fact, for three contemporary works—and by opting for the tragic ending rather than the spurious conciliatory one, Cacoyannis and the translator, Minos Volanakis, provided us with a much more meaningful experience. The translation itself is, on the whole, both attractive and serviceable. An occasional inversion or grammatical lapse can be overlooked, and prosaisms like "For some reason, the Gods want my despair," and loss of cadence as in "How marvelous is speech! You name dark things, and in naming they become fair!" (I am not sure of the line division, but there is hypertrophy somewhere) are infrequent. And, surprisingly, the poetry is spoken, with a few exceptions, well enough: more as poetry than as prose, which is as it should be, even if there are moments when the declamatory might have yielded to the natural.

Irene Papas's Clytemnestra unfortunately speaks as if English were Greek—or, rather, not Greek—to her; she also moves less than gracefully. But she has a regal aspect and a dark intensity that make up for much. Mitchell Ryan, on the other hand, lacks royalty in speech as in bearing; but if one wants a weak Agamemnon, he certainly is that. Alan Mixon is astonishingly good as Menelaus (I had always an impression of stiffness and monotony from him before), and Erin Martin makes a Chorus Leader who moves and speaks handsomely and looks even better. Christopher Walken, as Achilles, suggests the beach at Malibu more than the one at Aulis, but at least he is good-looking and well-spoken. The lesser roles are played without distinction, but Jenny Leigh's Iphigenia is magnificent. Starting as almost a child, she next turns into a somewhat dizzy debutante; then, as tragedy overtakes her, she shoots up to meet it. Suddenly, but not so suddenly as to be unconvincing, this Iphigenia has become a heroine: superb at something that is neither superhuman strength nor unbearable pathos but simply humanity. Humanity in its uncompromised nakedness: so gentle, defenseless, and beautiful that its sacrifice would tear us apart if it were not an act of triumph. Miss Leigh brings off heroism without ceasing to be winsome; she is transcendent yet still one of us. If anyone questions the concept of catharsis, this performance will dispel his doubts.

Michael Annals has designed a set of steps that seems properly doubled up with grief, but his costumes have a bargain basement look; Annals can do very well on a big budget, but scrimping is not his forte. Marvin David Levy, a genuinely undistinguished composer, has provided music that is at least unassertive except for one moment of

highly obtrusive obstreperousness. Jules Fisher's lighting is, as always, a paragon of inconspicuous inventiveness, and his last slow fadeout on the agonized face of Clytemnestra is the perfect spelling out of *finis* with lights. Thanks to this production, the flower of Greek drama is at last, instead of being pressed to death in a herbal, presented for our delight in a modest but attractive vase.

The next-best things have been two off-Broadway rock musicals, *Hair* and *Your Own Thing*. The former is an anti-war and anti-draft protest play crossed with a pro-hippie urban pastoral; its simple, rather naive book has its amusing moments and some arresting production numbers. The lyrics are sometimes telling, and the music is consistently refreshing. *Hair* marked the auspicious debut of Joseph Papp's charming Public Theatre, and the even more auspicious one of rock in the theatre (previous attempts, like *The Golden Screw*, were disastrous both musically and theatrically). For *Hair*, Galt MacDermot has composed a score that is contemporary without bashing in the eardrums or bludgeoning the brain. It proves that the current popular idiom can and must revitalize the American musical theatre. The hippies of *Hair* may be rather too washed, even as its protest is somewhat watered down, but it has humor, pertinacity, and zest; and its youthful cast, under Gerald Freedman's direction, was as persuasive as ice-water to a parched palate.

Your Own Thing is an even more interesting case: a rock-musical based on *Twelfth Night* would seem calculated to displease. It so happens that it opened just after another, conventional musical version of the play had failed, and Joseph Papp's "happening" version of *Hamlet* had aroused the righteous ire of all but the Kotterie of the Elect. Why does *Your Own Thing* work so well? First, because it does not take itself or its source seriously. Using the Shakespearean plot loosely, and the subplot not at all, it tells of the tangled loves of Olivia the discothèque-owner, Orson the agent, and Sebastian and Viola, orphans of a rather mod storm, who are alternately taken for Disease, the fourth member of a rock quartet called The Apocalypse. At unexpected moments, the language slides back into Shakespeare, and, spoken incongruously but affectingly, emerges more as a tribute than as persiflage.

Moreover, there are some ingratiating inventions all the way, as, for instance, having some cheerful or funny projections jostling one another on the all-white set—among them the faces of John Wayne, Bogart, Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth, the Pope, Buddha, Arthur Godfrey, and God—to comment, in appropriate off-stage voices, on the action. These comments are sometimes hilarious, and produce an effect more of liberation than of mere shock. Wayne's is the voice of reaction, Bogey's that of Being With It, and the others all contribute their own thing. The cross-purposes and mistaken identities of the plot blend into some jolly views of the polymorphously perverse hippie heaven on

earth. The girls in boys' clothing, bed-tricks, and similar improbable Elizabethan stage conventions have become everyday realities; and even if Donald Driver's book and direction do not exactly take a stand on all this, they strike some provocative poses. The music and lyrics of Hal Hester and Danny Apolinar (with the sporadic collaboration of Shakespeare) are idiomatic and functional, and the young cast swings down to its very last member (including the ones who are supposed to be squares). The outstanding performance is Leland Palmer's Viola. Miss Palmer is a wispy dynamo of a girl with eyes like outraged hemispheres of a schizoidly split world. She is suffering from advanced tomboyishness and seems to have no control over her body beyond the knees, where strange jack-knifings occur with crazy *désinvolture*. She is rather like a mechanical doll just turned into a human one, and everything fills her with a tart mixture of stupefaction and exaltation. She is sexless yet irresistible, and it is small wonder that Tom Ligon's dapper Orson is sufficiently enamored of her to resign himself to homosexuality as the apparent price of fulfillment. When she finally reveals (in part) an adorable little bosom, not only is Orson relieved, but also every spectator's bosom swells with a sense of well-being.

Next in interest are Two English imports. The better one of these is Charles Dyer's *The Staircase*, a play about the prickly domesticity of a homosexual *ménage*. One of the two middle-aged lovers is a gents' hair stylist who, years ago, took in and trained a failed actor. Together they run a hair salon in one of the glummer suburbs of London. Charles, the ex-thespian, bitchily aggressive, dreams of a return to show business; Harry, the homely and motherly now and future barber, feebly fights back but is generally protective and admiring. There are only two non-events in this two-character play: Charles's daughter from an abortive marriage is due for a visit just as Charles is facing a short term in prison on a morals charge. Around these nuclei and a few others even more off-stage, Charles and Harry heap up their fears, aggressions, witticisms, sharp though oblique social comments, and strong but unspoken need for each other. Quite rightly the play has been compared to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and, though less dazzling than Albee's work, it rings truer.

I suppose that had one been lucky enough to see the play in London with Paul Scofield and Patrick Magee, depths beyond mere intelligent craftsmanship, lively observation, and implicit warmth might have emerged. Thus one character's name, Charles Dyer, is that of the author, and the other's, Harry C. Leeds, is, we are told explicitly, an anagram of it. Although the real-life Charles Dyer claims to have done this to avoid being sued by anyone, I suspect that there are deeper reasons, and that the two characters could be made to convey the conflicting yet complementary halves of one riven personality. Unfortunately, as staged and performed on Broadway, the play is always teetering on

the verge of shallowness, sometimes plopping right in. Eli Wallach, a generally overrated actor, has to work so hard on nancing up the part of Charles and getting his English accent right (he fails at the latter and succeeds excessively at the former) that he has very little left over for mere characterization; Milo O'Shea (whose Bloom in the film of *Ulysses* was likewise overrated) is adequate as Harry but, again, too soft and amorphous. Barry Morse has directed in many a wicked, or just knowing, leer at the audience, to which the audience responds manfully or unmanfully with loud bellows or tremulous squeals. Even in this production of *The Staircase*, however, incisive wit and whimsical sympathy emanate from this modest but meritorious play.

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie is Jay Presson's, an American woman's, adaptation of a novella by the Britisher, Muriel Spark, and as the play takes place in Edinburgh, was first done in London, has been directed here by Michael Langham, a Canadianized Englishman, and stars a London-trained Australian woman, we may safely refer to it as British. It has a serious, even important, idea underlying it, but handles it on a fairly superficial level. The problem is whether Miss Brodie, a rousing eccentric of a teacher in a staid Scottish girls' school of the Thirties, who takes possession of her pupils' minds and souls lock, stock, and barrel, is, in fact, a benefactress or a menace. For she does teach her eleven-and-twelve-year-olds extraordinary, thrilling things about Giotto and *La Traviata* and her lover who died "for them" in Flanders Field, which fire their imaginations; and she foretells brilliantly gaudy futures for them, which whet their ambition. But, fecklessly and incurably romantic, she also propels them into premature love affairs as well as spiritual dalliance with Fascist dictators whom she sees as Robin Hoods, and actually drives one girl into the arms of Franco and death.

Miss Brodie—absurd, lovable, stimulating and pernicious—is indeed an absorbing character, and the interplay of her private and public lives, her compacts and conflicts with her wards, and the disentangling of her merits and guilt are well worth dramatic scrutiny. But the trouble with the play is, first, that it concentrates so hard on Jean Brodie that she alone achieves roundedness, while all other figures remain in a state of more or less well-painted cardboard two-dimensionality. Secondly, Miss Brodie herself is seen preponderantly as an eccentric, a very human caricature but a caricature all the same, so that her wellsprings remain ultimately unexplored. And the work keeps fluctuating between farcical comedy and (not wholly unfarcical) drama, which is bothersome, too: if your characters are solid, you can play around with the tone; to have both of them brittle and unsteady makes me feel in a glassware store whose very floors are made of glass.

Zoe Caldwell, though a greatly competent actress, makes Miss Brodie into a burlesque. Miss Caldwell may be aware of her militant home-

liness that makes the overwhelming passion for her of a profligate artist and fellow-teacher seem less than credible; and perhaps she is overcompensating for this by turning herself into a "character" every mercilessly idiosyncratic inch of the way. I must plead earnestly for not casting insuperably plain women in the parts of bewitching ones—I have seen on past occasions Miss Caldwell, for all her consummate technique, ruin Ophelia and Millamant. Here it is not a question of ruining anything, only of undermining it. An additional difficulty is the Americanness of the various schoolgirls. There is a kind of precocious gentlemanliness or ladylikeness, an odd combination of maturity and innocence, about British children that the far less disciplined Americans (whatever the performers' actual ages may be) simply cannot render.

Michael Langham has directed the play routinely in Joe Mielziner's utilitarian scenery. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is far from being prime theatre, but at least it does concern itself with ideas, which are sorely missing from today's American drama that subsists entirely on gags, situations, and posturing.

When the American theatre tries to *think*—which is, God knows, a luxury it does not often indulge itself in—the results are likely to be appalling. Out of piety for the dead, I shall pass over *More Stately Mansions*, an unfinished play O'Neill thought he had destroyed. But there is always that dog that's friend to men, and with its nails will dig such things up and put them on. The only remarkable thing about this dreary production was Ingrid Bergman's performance, which demonstrated that the gap between the generations is as nothing to that between a successful movie star and a genuine actress. José Quintero once again displayed his directorial ineptitude, but that is hardly worth remarking on any more.

As of this writing, I have not seen Robert Anderson's *I Never Sang for My Father*—but I have seen other plays of his, read the reviews of this one, and do not particularly believe in miracles. I have, however, seen the only other current attempt at thought, Edward Albee's *Everything in the Garden*, which, to begin with, is not really Albee's, but the late Giles Cooper's. What Albee has done is neither a mere transposition from England to the U.S., nor a genuine rethinking and rewriting. It is rather like that "original" poem once submitted to me by a Radcliffe girl, which consisted of a fairly well-known anthology piece with *one* word (no less and no more) changed in every line, and in every instance for the worse.

What Cooper had written was an interesting cross of black absurdist farce with stiff-upper-lip British comedy-drama. It is the story of suburban wives working as highly-paid prostitutes with their husbands' consent, so as to provide more gracious family living—everything for the home and garden—a set-up they are willing to protect even at the cost of murder. But this satire on hypocrisy is all couched in under-

statement and swathed in matter-of-fact English *sang-froid*. There are cozy bickerings, mean little prejudices, and major mock proprieties shored up against the gaping hole of corruption at the center, which is, with the exception of an outburst or two, quietly ignored. Thus Cooper's play becomes a giant litotes, an immense, indecent circumlocution, as funny as it is chilling.

How does Albee accost this? While sticking very close to the outline, he writes in scenes of malicious marital bitchiness, prurient curiosity between bed partners, violent anti-Semitic, anti-Negro, and anti-napalm rage (one of the husbands is involved in manufacturing napalm), but all these courageous ironies and indictments are some five to fifty years too late. The fancy, internecine denunciations of one character by another are precisely what is out of character here. Points that Cooper made forcefully by not stating them, Albee mucks up with hysterical underscoring or heavy sarcasm. He has introduced a narrator who is also the *raisonneur* and who may well be the most fatuously sophomoric character in recent American drama: a good many of his comments consists of merely repeating a line he or someone else has just spoken, only this time with a smirk and fruity drawl smack out at the audience.

The staging by Peter Glenville is pedestrian, the acting, except for that of the able Barry Nelson, uninteresting if not downright bad, but the worst thing, surely, is the casting. Almost all the husbands exude strong suggestions of pederasty, and none of the wives could, even on the most bullish white-slave market, earn two hundred dollars per sexual session as stated. In this disregard for the most elementary realities from which the Absurd can take off, we see exemplified the hurtling of Albee and his associates into an absurdity with a lower-case "a" that removes his work more and more from any significance whatever.

American comedy has been represented by a veritable rogue's gallery, which ranges from Bruce Jay Friedman's crassly factitious *Scuba Duba* whose high point is the baring of a hideous Englishwoman's floor-length bosom while pseudo-profound jibes are ground out in mock-absurdist manner, all the way down to Carl Reiner's *Something Different*. Whereas most of this latter concoction is merely labored, senseless, and achingly devoid of wit, the last fifteen minutes open up new dimensions of awfulness that even I, exposed to and hardened by decades of trash, could never have suspected and scarcely endure. At best, there is a thing like *Spofford*, poorly adapted and barrenly staged by Herman Shumlin; but because Peter de Vries's underlying novel has its share of middlebrow, solidly anti-intellectual fun, the play, too, offers a few laughs among its longueurs. What does make for pleasurable daydreaming by is the performance of Melvyn Douglas. He manages to make the part of a philosophical chicken farmer (doesn't the mere description set your teeth on edge?) into something quite personal and gracious.

The Broadway musical has become mired worse than ever, and is, at this point, as little worth discussing as shedding tears for. The only thing of note I encountered in it was a performance by Alice Playten in *Henry, Sweet Henry*. This young actress's gifts first struck me when they shone out of that perfectly worthless film, *Ladybird Ladybird*, and they have continued to grow ever since. That she can belt out a song stentorianly is of much lesser interest than that, given the skimpiest materials, she can create a character.

Barely more alive than the musical has been the repertory theatre. APA gave us three new productions: Ghelderode's *Pantagleize*, George Kelly's *The Show-Off*, and Ionesco's *Exit the King*. Though *Pantagleize* is not one of its remarkable author's best plays, it deserved better than this badly cut, adequately directed, and wretchedly acted production, in which no performance was good and Ellis Rabb's in the lead shameless. *The Show-Off* proved absolutely not worth reviving, even if it did give Helen Hayes a chance to milk her lines like an electronic milking machine (though she did drop quite a few of them, which just goes to show that even computers aren't perfect) while also engaging in a Which of Us Can Love the Other More contest with the audience. *Exit the King* is, postlap sarian rhetorical Ionesco, but to a bravura director and company it might prove an exciting challenge. In Ellis Rabb's production everything was mouthed, mangled, or cut, with Richard Eaton, as the King, giving one of the most offensively inane and vulgar performances I have ever seen in the professional theatre. The others in the cast were scarcely better, except for Eva Le Gallienne as the First Queen, an intelligent and aristocratic performance that had somehow drifted into this rampaging kindergarten. APA today has reached an all-time low, and can now go only up or out.

Things were not much more encouraging at Lincoln Center. First we had a visiting production, *The Little Foxes*, staged by Mike Nichols. Lillian Hellman's once reasonably effective melodrama has not worn well: papier-mâché people are even more moribund than mere mortals, and not all the oil of Araby could keep such a mechanical little plot from rusting. The performances by such "names" as Anne Bancroft, George C. Scott, Margaret Leighton, E. G. Marshall, and several lesser lights proved chiefly that acting in America consists of everybody doing, without regard for the others, his own bit, in whatever style, lack of style, or outright oafishness he possesses. The single exception to this was Richard A. Dysart, whose Horace was not only a thoughtful and restrained performance, but also one that tried to adjust even to such rank self-indulgence as Anne Bancroft's. Mike Nichols revealed that his talent, at present, does not go beyond comedy, and his notion of making the Negro servants carry on as though coached by LeRoi Jones for the imminent take over was, I'm afraid, not quite the right kind of comedy.

Next, the Repertory Company (so-called) took over again with *Saint*

Joan, John Hirsch directing. Shaw's play has long since begun to creak, but in this production the sound was more that of a death rattle. Hirsch, who had done rather nicely with two previous efforts here, cast doubt on one's former approbation: his mounting of the play was quirky when not downright stodgy. The positive elements were two stalwart performances by Canadians, Tony Van Bridge's Cauchon and William Hutt's Warwick, and the compelling costumes by Michael Annals, an Englishman. The domestic contributions were more or less disastrous—ranging from minor visitations like Robert Symonds's Stogumber or Edward Zang's Dauphin to major calamities like John Heffernan's Inquisitor and Diana Sands's Joan. Miss Sands gave a plodding, monotonous, and coarse performance, and in any case a Negro Maid with an accent that under the slightest strain lapses into Harlem lacks even basic visual and aural credibility. As for Heffernan who, after Michael O'Sullivan, is the most bizarrely crotchety actor in the land, he actually managed to make a shatterproof part splinter into minuscule fragments: arbitrary inflections, lurching and quavering tempos, and mushrooming pauses.

The American Place Theatre's *The Ceremony of Innocence* suggested that Ronald Ribman keeps inching his way toward writing a genuine play; the new Negro Ensemble Company showed us personable young actors with a sense of ensemble work that augurs well. Unfortunately, their opening bill, Peter Weiss's *Song of the Lusitanian Bogey*, was pure agit-prop, though the performers did occasionally manage to make it affecting. Michael A. Schultz's direction was commendable, but the translation by Lee Baxandall did not inspire confidence and the music by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson was an embarrassment.

I have left for the last the dregs of the season, Joseph Papp's *Hamlet*. Since I do not feel obliged to review happenings, I shall state merely that it is a reduction of the play to meaningless hash. With some point of view to it, even hash may be worth considering; but Papp has no other discernible purpose than, having failed with every more orthodox attempt at staging a play, to create a splash by jumping on the Kott-Brook bandwagon. My attitude no doubt qualifies me as one of those whom Robert Brustein stigmatized in his review as preferring "their Kulchur pre-packaged, standardized, and wholly digestible like a TV dinner," but then, unlike Mr. Brustein, I am not committed to a policy of No More Masterpieces with the consequence of having to describe this production in one paragraph as "mere irreverence" without "a definable point" and in the next as dedicated to the discovery of "what theatre can mean to America in the sixties." On the present evidence, a new concept in garbage disposal: masterpieces as trash cans.

LUCY R. LIPPARD

Constellation by Harsh Daylight: The Whitney Annual

THE ART CRITIC'S GREAT OPPORTUNITY to beat a dead horse comes once a year with the Whitney Annual. Some premature hopes for the animal's resuscitation were inspired by the move to the new Breuer building, but they were dampened by last year's sculpture show, and this year's painting exhibit makes them seem total fantasies. As America's most prestigious American painting display, the Annual is supposed to provide a broad view of whatever is being painted right here right now. This time new lows were reached with Ford Foundation aid toward in-depth esthetic slumming in the rest of the country—theoretically admirable and practically regrettable, since the all-star show is something of a horrorscope. The most journalistically touted result of this quest has been Chicago's "Hairy Who," but the group's name is its most original attribute.

For some reason, people keep expecting New York's current supremacy (in quality of art produced) to be challenged by some provincial David, a hope poignant mainly in its naiveté. No need to reiterate the McLuhanisms and pre-McLuhanisms about the speed of communications. The best American art is being made in New York now not only because New York has skyscrapers, theatres and melting pot, but because this is where the original painting and sculpture is being done and everyone knows it. Original painting breeds good painting and big cities are the centers now for the same reasons that they have always been—more visual and intellectual stimulation in the realm of seeing art (which must still be *seen* in full scale and full presence) and of talking about art with other artists.

From a distance, the New York art world is seen either as a blight on international culture, a morass of commercialism and uncrackable cliques, or, equally inaccurately, as the light of the world to be assiduously imitated rather than confronted. In past centuries there was less traveling to the recognized centers (though more than is generally acknowledged) and it was more likely that several cities at once would nurture their own innovations. Today, however, it is relatively convenient for artists to go directly from school to their chosen "School," and this has become both necessary and stimulating, a part of the "shrinking world" that might as well be accepted as fact. Paris may become The Center again, but only if the most original French artists start staying home instead of migrating periodically to the Chelsea Hotel.

Group shows are impossible to write about, and the Whitney is

worse than most because too much is absent and too little present for generalizations about how American painting faces life. In any case, American painting doesn't face life very often, but faces American painting, with an apprehensive glance at American sculpture, said to be enjoying a "renaissance" at the expense of painting. The better art today seems to be art about art in one way or another. At the Whitney such comment includes Lichtenstein's lively reincarnation of 1930's "moderne" painting (begun before Bonnie and Clyde shot down the fashion world), Dominick di Meo's outright cribbing of Dubuffet, and other art that formally adapts the means of older art to personal ends, with recognizable motif-borrowing to make a pictorial or conceptual point (Shahn's Goya reference, Greene's Rubens reference, Goldberg's Duchampian title, McGarrell's Dali-Magritte floating loaves of French bread). Or, in the case of advanced abstraction, it comments critically and "self-critically" on the art just previous to it, with an eye to eliminating esthetically exhausted qualities and values. It is not just the critics and historians who are aware of this constant evolutionary process, the complex interweaving of ideas and influences that is for the knowledgeable viewer by far the most interesting aspect of an event like the Annual. The artists themselves apply these standards, and their severest critics are other artists, those involved in similar goals as well as those opposed to these goals.

Like any other "scene" today, the art world is oedipally and paranoiacally motivated. The pitfalls involved in writing about a highly specialized art for a highly specialized audience are compounded by attempts to communicate the endless subtleties and innuendoes to the non-art reader. I should at least say that American painting is now in a sort of dilemma, admitted by some and denied by others. Since 1960, a good many painters have deserted to the third dimension, and most abstract painters are distinctly ambivalent about illusionism, or frankly fake pictorial space. Illusionism may be unnecessary, unnatural and undesirable to painting and if so, painting as surface alone and as an "object in itself" is the only valid goal. This goal, on the other hand, has obvious limitations and many of them have already been reached. From another angle, a more personal one, the dilemma does not exist for those painters who are still doing original work in the medium.

Among the alternatives to the art-as-object impasse is an "abstract illusionism" contending that contradictory illusions of space are more faithful to the nature of painting per se than total emphasis on surface. This good-natured admission of the pictorial basis (or failings, depending on how you look at it) of painting is not broadly accepted, particularly by those with a firmly conceptual bent. They prefer to see painting as a vehicle for ideas, a metaphysical rather than purely physical object. Others are exploring the possibilities of a dematerialization of the object itself—a thinness or transparency, or disregard

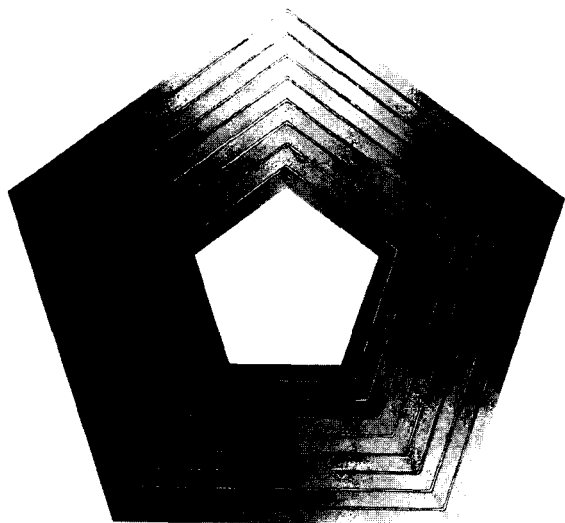
for painting's pretensions to sculpture. The first group is well represented at the Whitney but indicates no great potential, aside from Ron Davis' fiberglass painting; the second two can't be discussed at all, since they are wholly unrepresented (except perhaps by Bengston's crumpled metal sheet).

It is hard to believe there are one hundred and sixty-five paintings in the show, so few are memorable. Those twenty or so of high quality were often handicapped by an installation so bad it seemed to have been planned with malice aforethought, though in all charity it may be attributable to simple ignorance and insensitivity. I am complaining about the meaningless mixture of styles and sizes, such inexcusable juxtapositions as a Karl Knaths and a John Ferren apparently hung together because of their single similarity—a concentrically colored form; or the placement of a small, modest, gray-toned landscape by Jane Wilson between an immense blaring Krushenick and a huge pink Olitski; or the Mangold hung on a partition split by cracks exactly like the lines in the painting; or a pair of Jo Baers on the same cracks and over a line of little legs that hold up the walls, or the selection of a ridiculously small work by Al Held. The presence of much third-rate work augmented the air of shoddy impermanence offered by the installation. The quality of the show as art could have been improved by the inclusion of William Copley, Brice Marden, Doug Olson, Robert Ryman, Sidney Tillim, Richard Tuttle, and Leo Valledor, among others, but there was good work by the following: Albers, Baer, Bengston, Bishop, Christensen, Frankenthaler, Gourfain, Hinman, Insley, Jensen, Kelly, Krushenick, Mangold, Martin, Newman, Noland, Novros, Pearlstein, Pearson, Pousette-Dart, Pettet, Rosenquist, Ruscha, Twombly, Wesley, Wiley, and Young.

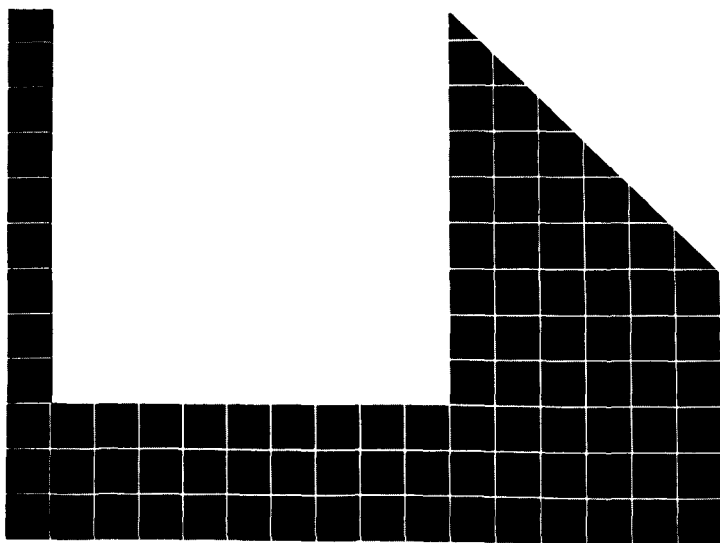
I have said before, and I shall say again, that the so-called "cult of the new," with which artists and critics are constantly accused of being obsessed, is actually a self-imposed cult of the difficult. And the artist is more often the victim than his commentator or viewer. Success is compromised by acceptance by the wrong people for the wrong reasons, and success in turn can eventually compromise the art. It is extraordinarily difficult to keep on making difficult art when a lapse into the easy can mean the ultimate in fame and fortune: one's picture in *Vogue*, one's name in *Time*, a town house or a country house, now unneeded grants, artist-in-residencies at socially acceptable colleges, lionizing, fur coats and private schools—the whole bit. These things can be difficult to dismiss for someone accustomed to the beef stew, unheated apartments and scrounging for materials money that is the lot of most artists in this affluent age. The effort it takes to dismiss them inevitably drains the energy needed to keep working on a difficult art. Esthetic survivors of what the late Ad Reinhardt called a "howling success" are hard to find. And sour grapes can turn all that



Kenneth Noland	GRADED EXPOSURE	1967	Acrylic on canvas	7' 4¾" × 19' 1"	Collection: Robert Rowan, Pasadena
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Frank Stella
CHARLOTTE TOKAYER
 1963
 Oil on Canvas
 87" × 91½"
 (courtesy of Leo Castelli Gall.



Will Insley
WALL FRAGMENT
 1967
 Liquitex on masonite
 8' × 10'8"
 (courtesy of Stable Galle



Frank Stella
HAGMATANA III
 1967
 Fluorescent acrylic on canvas
 120" × 240"
 Collection: David Whitney
 (courtesy of Leo Castelli Gallery)*

lovely new wine to vinegar. The greatest rancor is founded on disillusionment and is reserved for those major figures who succumb not to success but to public relations, or to a self-conscious stance set up by friendly critics.

Frank Stella has been in the unfortunate position of being something of a test case. He is virtually the first modern American artist to make it on a really big international scale while still in his early twenties. His very first New York show was in the Museum of Modern Art's *16 Americans* exhibition in the winter of 1959-60. He had only graduated from Princeton in 1958, and in the brief interim had painted apartment houses in Astoria, as his wife, the critic Barbara Rose, has recalled in a tribute to Stella's dealer, Leo Castelli. While critical reception was initially either bad or baffled, and one gathers that sales were rare, for an unknown of 23 Stella was way ahead of the game; he has remained there ever since. And this success was entirely deserved. In the last three years, however, the work has failed to keep up with the reputation; while this may be simply a personal fact, its relation to the factor of early success makes it worth analyzing. Stella himself must be aware of some change, since he recently broke his long and dignified silence by publishing a letter to the editor of a leading art magazine; such letters are the best indications of insecurity on the current scene, especially when they pick up on petty critical points hardly worth refuting.

In the 1959 Museum catalogue, Carl André wrote of Stella's black striped paintings: "Art excludes the unnecessary. Frank Stella has found it necessary to paint stripes. There is nothing else in his painting. Frank Stella is not interested in expression or sensitivity. He is interested in the necessities of painting. . . . His stripes are paths of the brush on canvas. These paths lead only to painting." It is hard to explain in simple terms the importance of such sentiments, or anti-sentiments, at that particular point in American painting. Art for art's sake was not new, nor was fidelity to the medium and exclusion of the unnecessary. Ad Reinhardt had been making solid black paintings for some time and Barnett Newman's single stripes provided another counterpart. Clement Greenberg was influentially demanding a modernist openness and clarity (though he seems to have gotten more than he bargained for), and the trend toward simplicity and intellectual logic, as opposed to Abstract Expressionism's introversion and emotive painterliness, had already been set in motion by Jasper Johns (and by Albers, Kelly and others). Yet Stella's (and a little later Dan Flavin's, Don Judd's) unequivocal rejections of illogic, illusion, and allusion, his advocacy of symmetry, impersonalism and repetition, was unique in its impact on younger artists, most of whom were older than Stella himself. He did not write, but his ideas spread through conversations and through criticism.

Stella's "breakthrough" (a favorite American phrase and phenome-

non) seemed almost miraculous around 1962-64. It was some time before the obvious sources were mentioned. (For instance, he had been one of the few abstract artists acute enough to recognize the implications of Johns's work and their applicability to abstraction.) The black paintings, and the succeeding aluminum paintings (with notched corners that began the "shaped canvas" boom) were art about art in the highest sense. It seemed that he had looked at painting as it *was* in 1959, brilliantly diagnosed its symptoms, and prescribed the "right" cure; there was in fact more than a touch of righteousness when certain critics, among whom I include myself, began writing about this process. Yet, as Mel Bochner has noted since, "the logic and stringency of Frank Stella's earlier work directly opposed growth. His *completeness* was his insistency." (*Arts*, May, 1966.) Or, as another young and formerly admiring artist has put it: "Stella started out as a genius and ended up as an art student." For he had no development in the usual sense, which was one of the great disadvantages of his intensely rejective position. Partly because he was unknown in 1959, and because he had no public esthetic past, Stella seemed to have wiped the slate cleaner than any of his predecessors. The metallic copper, purple, green, and flesh-colored paintings continued on the theme of a striped configuration entirely dependent upon (or regulating) the shaped support. Each painting was a single forceful entity—non-relational instead of traditionally composed with contrasting forms and colors.

By 1965 the striped theme had been diluted into multiple V-shaped forms and two colors. Some of the paintings zig-zagged across the wall with a dynamism that seemed decadent and incongruously febrile. The 1966 exhibition offered a drastic change in principles, though not so drastic a *style* change as some thought. The new paintings were asymmetrical, illusionistic, illogical, and multicolored in jazzy day-glo tints. The 1967 show was similar, though these paintings were based on a circle instead of a triangle; instead of looking curiously like lesser artists who had been influenced by Stella, they looked like updatings of Frank Kupka's original but pallid and unresolved abstractions, or minor work from the 1930's. Six basic forms were made in three variations each, these being constant in each group. The titles with roman numeral *I* interweave the multi-banded edges of the circular forms with a tricky result that is the most impressive of the three possibilities, mainly because it is simpler and therefore more attractively decorative, though the luxurious entrelac is more like a psychedelic poster than the Book of Kells. Titles numbered *II* consist of superposition of the outer shape's components, often rectangular, over concentrically striped circular elements; they are flat and dull. *III* is the worst, the modern gothic type, where the circles define themselves by tricky bends in the stripes, and it was one of these that the Whitney chose for the Annual. In this third variation

especially, black bands and flashy contrasts are employed to strengthen ideas not inherently strong, and basically good ideas are transformed into empty elegance. The premise is exposed as slippery and exaggerated rather than complex; Stella seems to be grasping for logical straws to justify the merely hedonist approach that was always present in his work but was never before allowed to become paramount. The new paintings must be scrutinized to be formally understood, but initially they are "gorgeous." The fashionable world that was queasy about the implacability of the black work has welcomed the changes. Yet what a fall from grace for someone who had decried the fussiness and archness of just this sort of tricky painting: "All I want anyone to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of them is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion. What you see is what you see." (*Art News*, September, 1966.)

The fact that Stella's new work is unconvincing is not in itself of great import. A few more bad paintings won't change American art one way or another. What makes it worth discussion is that these unambitious decorations were painted by a man who is justly considered the major influence and most respected formal intelligence in recent American abstraction, and who is certainly one of the most important painters since 1945. It may take courage to go back on one's own broadly accepted principles this way, though it should also be said that Stella appeared to have no choice but to change. He had good reason to reject his own "minimalism." Not only had he come to a clear and ingratiating dead end with his rejective theme, but the style he had helped invent had become the prevailing mode, and thus "easy art" in its own turn. His most important earlier work is now seen by his greatest admirers on the critical list as an altruistic sacrifice for art in general, a transitional period between painterly expressionism and colorful exoticism. But it is more probable that it is Stella's own art that is in transition; he reached a climax (hopefully not *the* climax) at least five years ago. His dilemma is one which mature painters have always had, but rarely at the age of 32.

The trouble is, artists' crises or transitional periods should, ideally, not be given so much attention as to become public issues; they should be privately resolved and are of interest mainly as historical facts. But given the present star system, the motives are unavoidably public. The system demands that an artist continue to have a show once a year, continue to accept invitations to large group exhibitions (and in Stella's case, even to reproduce his early work for those who can swallow it now and couldn't then). It is customary to blame the dealers for some of these evils, but it is the system itself that is at fault, and indirectly, the artists who allow or are forced to allow it to continue unchanged. A man at the peak of his career in New York is not allowed to retire to the studio for a rethinking session, to come to terms with himself and with the art by others that surrounds him. He

loses money; people forget; the next show would be considered a "comeback" and all the more of a disaster if not successful. Only the most powerful artists, with moral as well as esthetic strength, can fight this system.

Stella is not the only one in the Whitney Annual whose predicament is apparent. Larry Poons's entry is entirely recognizable as his own, stylistically if not qualitatively. The yellow green field is spotted by large palely tentative ellipsoids that float vaguely across or fade into the ground; the familiar rotating movement has disappeared, or been absorbed into the rough dry brushwork of the ovals. Occasional drips and blotches are allowed to remain where they have fallen accidentally. This in itself is not unexpected. Poons has been associated with composers John Cage and LaMonte Young and has demonstrated an interest in the laws of chance while consistently disregarding any purity of approach. Anti-minimal from the beginning, he has been at pains recently to destroy any reference to the underlying system of serial progressions that visibly used to regulate his surfaces. Nevertheless, this is so obviously an inconclusive work that I am surprised the artist was willing to exhibit it, surprised because his standards up until now have been so rigorously high.

There is a great deal of painting around today that is *pretty* above all, but which finally gives little pleasure. This is not the place to get into the most fundamental values of contemporary esthetics, but the shallow and ingratiating attractiveness of so much painting at the Whitney seems more ominous than the return to illusionism. Artists like Jules Olitski, my candidate for the art world's most manufactured reputation today, are like David Wagoner's "lesser Victorian who has discovered a spring flower and treats it like an all-day sucker." One can hardly take seriously the voices raised in Olitski's defense on the grounds that he is really a "structural artist," that his vapid veils of sweet color are formally mitigated by the blobs of nostalgically gummy paint lurking at the corners, as though admitting the need for *some* substance. These enthusiasms can only be taken as exercises in public persuasion, and as such they have been highly successful. The best that can be said for paintings like his *Pink Tinge* at the Whitney—real visual muzak—is that they make one long for the fresh decisiveness of Robert Mangold's monochromatic spray paintings. The latter's *One Half Manila Curved Area* (one of the few outstanding works in the show and one which the Whitney has had the acumen to buy) treats the issues of color and shape with more clarity. Conceptual program and a highly subtle color change are fused without decorative braggadocio. While the totally monochrome, monotone solution to abstract painting's cul-de-sac has few formal possibilities left to it, William Pettet's one-surface blue (over pink) canvas indicates the infinite potential for expansion of a refined and personal chromatic sensibility.

The issue of prettiness is rooted in color solutions. For example, Darby Bannard, who showed in December at Tibor de Nagy, has made some important technical researches in color and is exploring the great variety of hues available in commercial paint, expanding the very limited artist's palette. The criticism that his color is "unsuitable to high art" is beside the point, since nothing is unsuitable to high art if a high artist can do something with it. The results of Bannard's research are banal not because the colors are banal but because his formal vehicle is banal, unlike Albers' squares or Ellsworth Kelly's panels. (The Kelly in the Whitney, incidentally, provides a fine and probably unintentional sight gag: it gets its L's worth in a right angle of Kelly green.)

The color artist who has gone ahead most steadily within his own voluntary and involuntary limitations is Kenneth Noland. His *New Day* at the Whitney is another of the few striking exhibits. The fall show at Emmerich did not include anything with quite its strength, and the major piece there, *Via Blues*, was marred by a nice gold stripping that added shadowed stripes to the top and bottom, throwing the proportions of the entire work off balance by chopping it off at each end and isolating the surface, thus limiting the color experience that comes with infinite expansiveness. Most of the colors in *New Day* are pale or muted, except for a bright lemon yellow band near the top. They are unevenly distributed but their gentle solidity, or weight, holds them in place just enough so they don't scatter jazzily as they do in the more conventionally "optical" paintings. In other periods, Noland has had trouble controlling the prettiness of the raw canvas whites; here they are handled with authority and have a function that is frankly rhythmic instead of merely contrasting. The colors group and regroup themselves into new combinations; the retinal speed with which the long horizontal bands move across the surface makes the thin lines seem brighter than the thick ones and at times certain colors seem to move to the right while others move to the left.

Noland's understated yet very strong color is his greatest strength. His greatest weakness is a tendency to elegance that dilutes this substance—elegance in the sense of over-refinement rather than understatement. I have never seen Noland fitting comfortably into the role of groundbreaker offered him by some observers, but he deserves credit as a serious painter involved with a view of color which he often brings off with more than success.

The prevailing critical concept of formal advance, of the inevitable progress of "modernism" has seemed not only intellectually attractive but inarguably *right* as applied to the art of the last fifty years. Now it seems challenged not by another viable critical system so much as by a certain disintegration of formal ideals. The time may come yet when critics don't just complain about categorization (except when they use it themselves) but find the artists' directions so various that

each one not only should be but must be considered for what it is, as an individual attempt at making art within a broader framework to which no established and historically oriented criticism will apply. A sense of, or perhaps a desire for such a situation may account for my particular and isolated pleasure in the two paintings by Richard Pousette-Dart and Alfred Jensen. At the age of 52, Pousette-Dart formally looks backward rather than forward, and at 65, Jensen has not "evolved" radically since the 1950's. I mention their ages because large museum shows seem to conspire against older established figures in favor of bigger, bolder, brighter, younger artists, but in this case the older men stand up well.

Pousette-Dart's *Cavernous Earth with Twenty-Seven Folds of Opaqueness* is heavily painted to the point of relief, so much so that one experiences a real vertigo looking at its mounds of pigment up close, as though the inch of literal space had become a binocular view of great height. Actually, it is the emotive intensity with which the painting's obsessive crust and palely radiating glows are handled that gives this effect. Pousette-Dart is an uneven artist and his ideas on a transcendental spirituality in art may even embarrass many viewers. Yet at their best his paintings convey a depth of universal feeling that is not often found today.

Jensen's *The Acroatic Rectangle* also employs a very thick impasto in tiny pointed mounds of color, though these form a tightly woven, ordered, and considered surface of color pattern. The theme is worked out according to an exceedingly complex system based on various archaic mathematical and mythic sources from any number of cultures. Knowledge if not full comprehension of this underlying structure and its intellectual roots endows the raw and brilliant paint handling and color effects with an added vitality and freshness. As Allan Kaprow has pointed out, "it is evident that Jensen has in his possession philosophic tools which have permitted his works to continue to evolve richly in a way that others' cannot, and thus he satisfies a vague need" in a cynical society for an art of depth (*Art News*, December, 1963). The painting itself is symmetrical, but the two striped and dotted panels are reversed, with an effect both balanced and unbalanced that suggests the yin-yang unity in duality. Its esthetic richness is due not merely to the physical or chromatic substance of the surface but to some indefinable factor of artistic maturity and profundity. Jensen's success has come late, but his canvas makes most of the others at the Whitney look very thin indeed.

FRANÇOIS BONDY

Paris Letter:

The New Metamorphosis of the Gods

THE PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST VOLUME of André Malraux's memoirs¹ was without any doubt the major literary event of Paris in the Winter 1967/68. He calls the book *Antimémoires* as a way of saying that he has never been interested in the private story of his inner self. The book, which was both expected and disbelieved in, came as a surprise; and there is that additional factor that the sequel to it will not be published until after the author's death.

For twenty-six years, Malraux had given up narrative writing, never even attempting to finish his last novel, *La Lutte avec l'ange*, whose manuscript was seized by the Gestapo; and during his nine years as President de Gaulle's Minister of Culture, his official duties have held sway over literary pursuits. In the past, there had always been a close connection between Malraux's actions and his writings—statue-snatching in Cambodia and *The Royal Way*; political action in China and Indochina and *Man's Fate*; experiences with the Spanish Republican air force and *Man's Hope*; participation in World War II and *The Walnut Trees of Altenburg*. But the kind of dramatic dialogue which goes to make up these novels cannot emerge from the activities of a Minister, whether he be reorganizing the Comédie Française, preserving historical monuments, cleaning Parisian buildings, creating *maisons de culture*, or sending the *Mona Lisa* to New York, the *Venus de Milo* to Tokyo, or Balthus to the Villa Medici. Even his official writings as Bard of the Regime—funeral orations for Braque and Le Corbusier and a speech in commemoration of Jean Moulin—cannot be considered literature, although one is included in *Antimémoires*. And however serious and sincere his commitment to French nationalism may be, this most internationally-minded Frenchman of our time cannot make of nationalism one of the great universal themes confronting man, on a par with History, Destiny or Death.

True, in the period between the fall of General de Gaulle's Rassemblement and his return to power, Malraux had completed his intense meditation on art, *The Voices of Silence* and *The Metamorphosis of the Gods*. But just as his first serious book, *Temptation of the West*, is more a novel than an essay, so is *The Voices of Silence* more a dramatic dialogue (one between artistic epochs and man's faith) than a straight history or philosophy of art. It can actually be called a novel in the manner of the *nouveau roman*, lacking both hero and

¹ ANTIMÉMOIRES, by André Malraux. Gallimard. To be translated by Terence Kilmartin. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

plot. This prestigious book, however, has earned more admiration than enthusiasm as few readers are able to master the complete work. I know of one of its translators who when asked by the publisher to write a blurb for it declined by saying he still had no idea what the book was about. Without the benefit of real narration, this brilliant monologue delivered by a breathlessly excited voice is as difficult to absorb as fireworks would be that lasted a whole night through. And even the brilliance is marred at times by a tone at once imperious and oratorical.

One might fear that his memoirs would be meditations of this same kind. *Antimémoires* as a title sounded threatening—too close to Ionesco's "anti-theater" or the "anti-novel" as defined by Sartre. The man whose titles had hitherto set the fashion had now apparently followed one, as did Aragon, whose latest novel, *Blanche ou l'oubli*, set out to prove that an old writer had mastered the newest tricks of structuralism. However, the success of *Antimémoires* with critics and readers alike was clear and immediate. Some critics, like Jean Bloch-Michel of *Preuves*, described it as "Malraux's most moving and important epic." Even on the Left, where Malraux as a political man no longer has many sympathizers, the book was praised by Maurice Nadeau in *La Quinzaine Littéraire* as well as by Claude Roy in *Le Nouvel Observateur*. And the fierce polemist, Jean-François Revel of *L'Express*, who found much to cavil with, concluded that there was in the book "a note of loneliness, of uncertainty, perhaps even of disquiet, the assertion of a talented writer in whom we may place great hope." This last remark can be better understood in the light of what younger writers have been saying for a long time about Malraux, that he is "a very gifted writer who disappeared all too soon."

Malraux begins by stating that he has never had any interest in his childhood, and this we may take as a direct reference to Jean-Paul Sartre's autobiographical work, *The Words*, which is about Sartre as a young boy. However, the differences between these two authors are less important than the fact that both left major novels incomplete and only returned to their story-telling years later through autobiography. Malraux's indifference to his private self belongs, of course, to an old French tradition, that of "the detestable self" of Blaise Pascal, which is opposed to "Confessions" and "Journals." In one of his many interviews, Malraux said that just as Marcel Proust had been the anti-Chateaubriand, he wanted to be the anti-Proust. He says the same thing in his studies of art when he tries to prove that every style originates in polemical opposition to the prevailing one.

François Mauriac, who at the age of eighty-two still writes his vigorous weekly "*bloc-notes*" in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, protested against Malraux's self-denial by asserting, "Only what is most secret to yourself concerns every one of us." The literary supplement of *Le Monde* gave more than two pages to an examination of Malraux and con-

cluded reproachfully that he is "a writer without heirs." The new French writers are more concerned with *l'écriture* than with Man and Destiny. But is this so damning? Marcel Proust and even Jean-Paul Sartre have no heirs, and Franz Kafka has too many of them. The influence a writer has on other writers cannot be the criterion of greatness, since an important author may himself have fulfilled everything which his own new vision could imply.

The publication of *Antimémoires* was followed by a barrage of "Conversations with Malraux" on radio and television and in *Le Figaro Littéraire* and other papers. For many years Malraux had abstained from speaking as an author, but now the leash was off, and the public benefited from a veritable outpouring of thoughts on Corneille, Stendhal, youth, adventure—stimulating views on the whole, but there was the impression of a vast propaganda machine at work, reminiscent of the times when Mauriac's *Mémoires* and *De Gaulle* were published. The impression deliberately conveyed was that French culture belongs to Gaullism and, as Mauriac himself said of Malraux, "the genuine intellectual Left is on our side." All of this may have added to the popularity of the book, but many critics got tired of it. McLuhanism has just reached French intellectuals and the relationship between the message and the medium, a strictly government-controlled television, was a bit too close here. I myself feel annoyance with a Regime celebrating itself on the occasion of a book by a Minister. In the week following its publication, I wrote enthusiastic reviews of *Antimémoires*; however, on re-reading the book now, I cannot recapture that first mood. It is possible that my sober second thoughts are due not only to a second reading but also to those external circumstances which should not, but do, affect a critic. This only proves that some time must elapse before a conclusive appraisal can be made.

The book is divided into five chapters—four bear the titles of novels by Malraux, and the fifth is called *Antimémoires*—wheels within wheels. Malraux has reproduced two long passages from *The Walnut Trees of Altenburg*, as if *Antimémoires* was to be another anthology of his best pages, like the Gallimard volume, *Scènes choisies*, published in 1946, or the prose selections published in a collection of classics and compiled by Georges Pompidou, then a teacher of French literature in a *lycée*. The chapter entitled "*La Voie royale*" turns out to be a hundred-page projected film scenario about a European adventurer in Indochina. The story was supposedly related to the author by the baron, Clappique, well remembered by readers of *Man's Fate*. Here *le farfelu* is introduced, a word and a concept essential to Malraux's earliest writings. It is related to *farfalla* (the butterfly) and means the weightless freedom of imagination and humor. However, my feeling is that this scenario must have been written years ago and has no real function in the book; it just happened to be available and unpublished.

Apart from these two eccentricities, the *Antimémoires* is a most lively tale, full of exciting, moving, terrifying and sometimes even hilarious episodes. No reader is likely to forget the description of the French army in action in 1940, which reminded me of Evelyn Waugh, nor of Malraux's meeting with the Chinese leaders. A political mission to Guiana has a touch of Alexander Dumas. The adventurous flight to discover the country of the Queen of Sheba and a chapter on India have an epic flow which contrasts to great advantage with the tense aphoristic style of the novels. There is also, at least at times, a real sense of humor and even a touch of self-deprecation. Malraux tells of his first meeting with General de Gaulle, during which the author apparently delivered a long tirade on French history and politics to an almost silent general. He notes that the meeting itself came about through a misunderstanding. Malraux believed he had been summoned by the general, whereas de Gaulle thought Malraux had requested the interview.

The great dramatic and descriptive scenes are reminiscent of Victor Hugo and Michelet, who are, next to Corneille, among Malraux's most beloved authors. In his final chapter, "*La Condition humaine*," Malraux evokes the German concentration camps through tales he has heard. It is like an atonement for his least successful novel, *Days of Wrath*, and is, at the same time, a truly modest, thoughtful exploration of the limits of inhumanity. We hear of a woman in a Paris hospital who is very ill upon her return from a camp and overhears her examining doctor say to his assistant, "All these people will be dead in ten years." In another incident a well-dressed French gentleman refuses to let this same woman move ahead in a line, shouting at her, "Why didn't you stay where you came from?"

To the reader of Nietzsche and Spengler, inhumanity is not specifically a "German disease." Malraux now believes that the Nation is the essential historical truth of the twentieth century, but he is not really a nationalist. When he was a prisoner, a German officer once asked him why he had joined the Resistance. His reply: "If Hindenburg had surrendered, and Hitler called to resist, which one would you have followed?" General de Gaulle, it seems, did not welcome this comparison although in his own *Mémoires* he himself speaks of Hitler as a man of great energy.

The central episodes of *Antimémoires* are the meetings with great leaders. We seem to walk through a Galerie de Glaces where we meet Trotsky, Nehru, Mao, de Gaulle and Malraux himself. In our time, national leaders appear to be the true embodiment of their people, men of profound intellectual depth, worthy of their role in history. They are at the same time, it seems, statues and living Gods, and accordingly mark the newest stage in the "Metamorphosis of the Gods."

In one of the best essays written on Malraux, "Malraux and the Demon of Action,"² Nicola Chiaromonte anticipated the *Antimémoires* when he wrote: "The rejection of the private world is extreme in Malraux, and includes a denial of all 'interiority' in the Kierkegardian sense." We understand then why he refuses to write a private autobiography. For Malraux the most public persons would appear to be the most interesting. These personalities are stylized by Malraux in the same way he imposed a stylization on Epochs of Art (Malraux's concepts call for capital letters). After Action, Revolution, Meditation, and Art, the Great Leaders are the latest avatar in Malraux's search for a metaphysical answer to man's quest.

In a sense, *Antimémoires* is an "imaginary museum" of contemporary history. It is anti-memoirs in the same way that *The Voices of Silence* is an anti-history of art. Malraux may well be anti-Proust, but he remains pro-Nietzsche and pro-Spengler. The pages where we meet samples of common humanity are welcome relief from the imposing succession of summit meetings. He also has an old-fashioned but very effective way of bringing in landscapes, trees and animals to recreate the atmosphere of a country or a continent. What disturbs me on second reading is that all these countries and continents turn out to be exactly as we imagine them. Eternal India and mysterious Africa are familiar entities. We do not meet them for the first time; we recognize them. There are, nevertheless, flashes of a great cinematic imagination, the fleeting visions found in all of Malraux's novels, like the one of Spanish widows standing in a cemetery each by an open grave as the funeral cortège approaches.

What can this book on History and Destiny mean to sophisticated French intellectuals who are reading Claude Lévi-Strauss and Michel Foucault? To them André Malraux must emerge as a great man of the nineteenth century. It should not be forgotten though that Malraux foresaw structuralism in *Temptation of the West*, when the Chinese says in a letter to his European friend: "For you, absolute reality was first God, then man; but *Man is dead*, following God, and you search with anguish for something to which you can entrust his strange heritage. Your minor attempts to construct a moderate nihilism do not seem destined to long life. . . ."³ And again, twenty years later in *The Walnut Trees of Altenburg*, a prefiguration of Michel Foucault argues that we must explore systems rather than man.

André Malraux uses all the magic of rhythm, and his stylistic brilliance is a far cry from Roland Barthes's *Degré zéro de l'écriture*.⁴

² *Tempo Presente* (August, 1960).

³ *Temptation of the West*, tr. by Robert Hollander (Vintage Books, New York, 1961), pp. 97-98.

⁴ *Degré zéro de l'écriture* (Editions Seuil, 1953); tr. by Annette Lavers as *Writing Degree Zero*, with a preface by Susan Sontag (Hill & Wang, 1968).

But between his very modern intelligence and his reliance on the old-fashioned prestige of style, there is a contradiction. The only novel in which this isn't felt is *The Royal Way*; and, oddly enough, Malraux refused to include this masterpiece in the Pléiade edition of his works. The contradiction is nowhere more apparent than in *Antimémoires*, which contains many of the best and some of the worst pages Malraux has written. On the other hand, few French books of whatever kind have been as free of the spite, meanness and polemics which seem to belong to so much of the best of French literature. All in all, André Malraux is possibly the greatest living French writer—"Malraux, alas!" This first volume of *Antimémoires* is not an integrated book, but its best chapters certainly belong in advance to every future selection of "great pages" from this living classic.

A JOURNAL ON & OF TRANSLATION

DELOS

DELOS is interested in the practice and theory of translation; in the history, the politics and the economics of translation; in the role of translation as a mediator between different ages, cultures, arts. Since the term translation covers so many forms of exchange and relation, DELOS also publishes work of more general literary and intellectual interest. The first of twelve proposed issues of DELOS appears in April 1968.

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Reviews

MARVIN MUDRICK

Face to Face with Their Own Limits¹

GOD HAS LATELY BEEN HARD PRESSED to please anybody at all. Catholic Old Believers like William F. Buckley, Jr., refreshed by jet-set fun at the Waldorf with Truman Capote and Lee Radziwill, anathematize the vernacular Mass as an affront to their medieval sensibilities. The ACLU, equally unappeasable, awaits with impatience the Supreme Court decision (by a 5-4 vote) outlawing churches. It has therefore seemed a good idea, among clergymen who keep up, to make God acceptable by admitting that He doesn't exist. (True, the idea has met with occasional objections. One of the most telling, in an essay reprinted in *Radical Theology: Phase Two*, is by John Wild, who says that to go so far is to "throw out the baby with the bath.") At any rate, the death-of-God theologians participate in TV and magazine symposia, publish articles and books, and thicken their arguments with copious quotes and selections from the Founding Fathers of Deicide: Blake, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, none of whom one should complain about being obliged to take another look at.

Anthologies suffer, characteristically, from absurd conjunctures: what could be more anticlimatic, for example, than a title like *World Drama from Aeschylus to Arthur Miller*? One reads Nietzsche, even at his windiest, in *Toward a New Christianity*, and then one reads Thomas J. J. Altizer, editor of the volume and a leader of the new movement: "Few, if any, thinkers have known the sheer horror of existence which Nietzsche unveiled." Few, if any, thinkers have turned out prose as smug and pasty as Altizer's; but he isn't bashful, he carries on without a blink, authoritatively elucidating the sheer horror of thinking:

Needless to say, such a wager entails a risk, and an ultimate risk at that. For the Christian who bets that God is dead risks both moral chaos and his own damnation. While the religious or the

¹ TOWARD A NEW CHRISTIANITY, ed. by Thomas J. J. Altizer. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$6.95. THE PREMATURE DEATH OF PROTESTANTISM, by Fred J. Denbeaux. Lippincott. Paper \$2.25. RADICAL THEOLOGY: PHASE TWO, ed. by C. W. Christian and Glenn R. Witting. Lippincott \$4.95. LSD, MAN & SOCIETY, ed. by Richard C. DeBold and Russell C. Leaf. Wesleyan. \$5.00. DRUGS, by Peter Laurie. Penguin. \$0.95.

ecclesiastical Christian has increasingly become incapable of speaking about damnation, the radical Christian, who has been willing to confront the totally alien form of God which has been manifest in our time, has known the horror of Satan and Hell, and can all too readily speak the language of guilt and damnation. He knows that either God is dead or that humanity is now enslaved to an infinitely distant, absolutely alien, and wholly other epiphany of God. To refuse a deity who is sovereign and alien other, or to will the death of the transcendent Lord, is certainly to risk an ultimate wrath and judgment, a judgment which Christianity has long proclaimed to be damnation. Nor can we pretend that it is no longer possible to envision damnation: the modern artist has surpassed even Dante in envisioning the tortures of the damned. So likewise modern man has known a moral chaos, a vacuous nihilism dissolving every ground of moral judgment, which is unequalled in history. The contemporary Christian who bets that God is dead must do so with a full realization that he may very well be embracing a life-destroying nihilism; or, worse yet, he may simply be submitting to the darker currents of our history, passively allowing himself to be the victim of an all too human horror. No honest contemporary thinker can ever lose sight of the very real possibility that the willing of the death of God is the way to madness, dehumanization, and even to the most totalitarian form of society yet realized in history. Who can doubt that a real passage through the death of God must issue in either an abolition of man or in the birth of a new and transfigured humanity?

There it is, the full gamut of seminary heroics (except for a few details like Christ, which Altizer attends to elsewhere in the essay). Of the other writers in the volume, it may at least be said that they make a bad joke now and then: ". . . we may, quite appropriately, paraphrase Faulkner's sentence when he writes in *The Sound and the Fury*: . . . it was men invented virginity, not women, by saying: it was men invented religion, not God."

Incidentally, as this *jeu d'esprit* suggests, art and sex are very in things these days, not only among the advanced clergy but even out in the boondocks. Fred J. Denbeaux, whose little book is intended as a traditionalist rebuke to Altizer *et al* ("Hopefully, Christianity may have entered into a more imaginative age, an age in which theological coquetry dies instead of the Deity"), drops as many okay art-names (from Bach to Merton) as they do, and is as committed to high-class products:

We are still so close to an age of violence, of prairies and cowboy heroes that we are in danger of forgetting that a civilization fulfills its obligation to "make" through its statesmanship, its music and its literature. We shall move forward and we shall survive only if we

are able to create composers, painters, architects and philosophers who will help us to see a higher vision than the dramas of cow-boys and Indians which still keep our imagination on the level of a child.

As for sex, on the chance that somebody thinks that Paul's attitude toward it was rather testy, Mr. Denbeaux explains that Corinth was a rough town at the time:

It must be kept in mind that Paul faced a special situation. *The necessity to spiritualize the gospel disappears when one faces a creative instead of a degenerate civilization* [italics the author's]. One comes to a different evaluation of the flesh within the painting of a Breughel, the sound of a Mozart, and the flesh of a fulfilling marriage from that within the context of a brothel culture like Corinth's. Flesh is just as much flesh in a statue of Michelangelo as it is in a pornographic picture. Flesh is just as much flesh in Verdi's *Aida* as it is in a lewd song. . . .

Radical Theology: Phase Two is a collection aimed, like *The Premature Death of Protestantism*, at refuting the anti-God theology; and its polemicists reaffirm the traditional answer by begging the question as helplessly as Mr. Denbeaux does. There is, though, one memorable ill-tempered piece, not by a Christian clergyman but by a rabbi, who is probably a lot more like the historical Paul than Mr. Denbeaux's version is, and who while expounding his no-nonsense Orthodox Judaism takes the opportunity to slip a knife into a local competitor:

For whatever such information is worth, and for whatever perverse consolation it may offer, let it be known that this intellectual dishonesty of preaching a "religion" which no longer accepts a personal God was already advocated several decades ago by a group of Jews in New York; and that far from signifying the "death of God," *ka-ve 'yakhol*, it commenced for them their own slow spiritual strangulation. If the new breed of Christian theologians believe that they are original innovators when they speak of a "religionless Christianity," they are in error; they have been anticipated in the Jewish community by the Reconstructionists when the latter proposed "Judaism as a Civilization" and "naturalistic religion" in which it was taught that one can be "Jewish" even though he clearly denies the existence of God as Judaism has taught it throughout the centuries. The consequences of this kind of belief, now exposed for all the world to see, are exemplified by a Reform clergyman who openly preaches agnosticism or atheism, deletes every mention of God from his service, even from the Shema—and yet is accepted as a bona fide member of a non-orthodox ministerial association!

This has the sweaty, bullying, atavistic look of the real thing, religion

in the days before the *Playboy* philosophy. We know without asking—and we don't ask!—what he thinks about wife-swapping and LSD.

No doubt, pretty much what Dr. Donald B. Louria thinks:

. . . I think that you've got to control certain things, and dangerous drugs happen to be one that we've decided that we're going to control. And LSD is one of them. That's all there is to it. . . .

Just because we have had thirty years of deterioration of the family unit does not mean that the family unit is dying. According to what has happened in prior western civilizations, in Greece and Rome, for examples, there's every evidence that the family unit will again strengthen as the cycle swings.

. . . I think that we can, at will, make a more disciplined society if we want to do so. I think that we have just gone too far in allowing permissiveness in the family and in the colleges. I think that this overly permissive attitude can readily be changed if we are willing to take a firm stand. . . .

LSD, Man & Society is a nonbook transcribed from the sort of conference held semiannually somewhere on a university campus: a formal paper by A on why LSD or religion or student activism is peachy-keen, one by B on why it's simply awful, one by C reconciling positions A and B, and informal discussions among the three in which each repeats exactly the same notions, less woodenly and more sloppily, that he has already presented in his paper. Sometimes there is even a touch of evidence along with the opinions. For this particular LSD panel, Dr. Louria is hard-headed John the old-time conscience, robustly opposed to turn-ons, drop-outs, and people who jump or fall out of windows:

. . . there is increasing evidence [though he doesn't tell us what it is] that subtle LSD-induced aberrations related to chronic abuse may in the long run exceed the damages inflicted acutely by the drug. Those who use frequently or chronically almost inevitably withdraw from society and enter into a solipsistic, negativistic existence, in which LSD is not merely an experience in the totality of living, but rather becomes synonymous with life itself. These individuals, colorfully described by their *confrères* as "acid-heads," engage perpetually in drug-induced orgies of introspection and are no longer constructive, active members of society. Often they withdraw not only from society but also from meaningful familial ties. Were the numbers of such individuals to increase markedly, such a group could constitute a real threat to the functioning of our society.

. . . the number of deaths attributed to jumping or falling out windows after ingesting LSD is clearly increasing . . .

Dr. Louria "has been very active in work on the social problems of narcotics as the chairman both of the Subcommittee on Narcotics

and of the Public Health Committee of the New York County Medical Society and as president and member of the New York State Council on Drug Addiction." No drop-out, in short.

The soft-headed member of the panel is a psychologist named Frank Barron, who specializes in "creativity." He makes an effort to sound businesslike: "I would not be willing to say that consciousness has been expanded or extended unless it could be shown to be so when the person is in his normal state, free of drug effects." But he is as wistful as Mr. Denbeaux, and as inarticulate. Whenever he approaches art he dissolves into sentiment; and he really seems to believe that the best evidence is whatever is too fine for words. One of the "main dimensions" of consciousness, according to him, is

Realization of depths or heights of the self for which no words exist. As you might expect, this dimension is rather difficult to define. I can only appeal from my introspection to your introspection in offering it for consideration. . . . Rainer Maria Rilke has perhaps come closest to expressing it both in *The Duino Elegies* and in his *Sonnets to Orpheus*. In the concluding sonnet of the Orpheus cycle occur these three lines, which may serve to evoke my meaning:

*Be the magic power of this immense
midnight at the crossroads of your senses
be the purport of their strange meeting.*

Well, for at least one reader, Mr. Barron's meaning remains as inaccessible as ever. A writer whose ear and mind perpetrate phrases like "man face to face with his own limits" can't, in any case, expect us to trust his sensitivity to the unheard vibrations of language. Mr. Barron is back to back with his own intellectual deficiencies; and he doesn't hesitate to pronounce his unconsidered blessing on the multitude: "At least part of the meaning of LSD today is this: that chemical technology has made available to millions the experience of transcendence of the individual ego, which a century ago was available only to the disciplined mystic."

The single interesting, convincingly documented, and encouraging paper in the book is by Dr. Albert A. Kurland, who describes the use of LSD in psychotherapy. He quotes from extraordinary statements made by patients under treatment, one of them

a forty-year-old Negro, [who] was brought to the hospital from jail after drinking uncontrollably for ten days. He had been draining whiskey barrels at his place of work, a distillery. . . .

During his LSD session, he felt he was being chased, stricken with a sword, run over by a horse and frightened by a hippopotamus. In his written report, he stated:

I was afraid. I started to run, but something said "Stop!" When I stopped, everything broke into many pieces. Then I felt as if

ten tons had fallen from my shoulders. I prayed to the Lord. Everything looked better all around me. The rose was beautiful. My children's faces cleared up. I thought of alcohol and the rose died. I changed my mind from alcohol toward Christ and the rose came back to life. I pray that this rose will remain in my heart and my family forever. . . .

The patient had been an alcoholic for four years before treatment; the "cure" was still effective a year later.

Evangelists like Mr. Barron, yearning for a pandemic state of grace, talk as if the effect of LSD is general and predictable ("the experience of transcendence of the individual ego"); but what seems obvious from detailed accounts by users is its tricky specialness to the person taking it. Nor can Mr. Barron get away with excluding "dangerous persons, *i.e.*, persons who are dangerous to themselves or to others," from the otherwise universal beneficence of LSD. For one thing, most of the patients whom Dr. Kurland treated successfully with LSD would doubtless have qualified as "dangerous." For another, bad trips happen to persons as respectable as Mr. Barron; to Peter Laurie and his wife, for instance:

Barbara was holding her left arm before her face. "It's like an old film; it lurches," though she was holding it still. I tried with a hand, and it writhed slowly, like the tentacles of a sea anemone (apparently the eyeball wriggles all the time to shift images onto fresh bits of retina; this movement is invisible until LSD knocks out the compensating mechanism, so one sees things moving slowly). It had taken quite a long time to get this far—the use of the word "trip" for an LSD experience is quite appropriate, though not in the sense one might imagine of strange lands and romantic experiences. For us it was very like going on a modern journey by aeroplane, say: a little fear, homely surroundings, aches, staying awake all night, dirtiness, more fear, the flat garish light of indoors at four in the morning. I became conscious of how badly made the house was; each particle of dust on the floor stood out like an overdone TV commercial for sink washing-powder. Colours were richer—the old varnished floorboards escalated from being just old varnished boards to a rich, cynical *House and Garden* honey colour, but the effect wasn't particularly pleasant.

. . . Then the patterns began: a line of lights so bright I looked round the room to see what they were. . . . Barbara began to say: "Oh hell, this is agony. When will it stop. What a ghastly life people must lead who take this for fun."

Lying still became impossible because of the contact of clothes or each other. My left arm felt horrible—light and infuriating. I wanted to tear it off and have some peace. . . .

We turned the light off again. I began to feel frighteningly sure

that this was madness; being roller-coastered inside your own head, knowing it was all illusion, yet unable to stop or control it. . . .

The next day we felt cold and remote, but got through a lot of work. Driving the children to school, I nearly crashed when a coloured girl came out of a grey house wearing day-glo orange trousers: they went off on my retina like a bomb in a free-church assembly. It is difficult to explain how long and gritty and unsatisfying the LSD experience was. For several months we used it as a comparison for anything unpleasant; yet the results were not at all bad. We both felt that it made us more sensitive to shape and colour, and that it made us more dispassionate about other experiences and relationships. . . . Before this trip I had made several attempts to read Laing's *The Divided Self*, an analysis of a certain type of schizophrenia, without being able to get any sense from it; afterwards it read like a guide-book to the town of my birth. . . .

Mr. Laurie's book is a piece of careful journalism that does very well the job it sets out to do, surveying and summarizing what is known about "drugs in society":

If it appears superficial, it must be remembered that although perhaps 10,000 scientific papers have been published on this subject—1,000 on the hallucinogens alone—in the last fifty years, there is an amazingly small amount of hard information available. Among scientists, as among laymen, this subject stimulates endless streams of subjective, narrative evidence, wild claims and repetitive accounts.

The principal, and most discouraging, fact is "the amazingly small amount of hard information available." Mr. Laurie has an eye for information that might (and should) unsettle lay preconceptions: he draws attention, for example, to studies which suggest that heroin addiction seldom lasts for longer than a decade, with or without treatment, and that it may often be the addict's successful self-therapeutic measure against the onset of schizophrenia. Mr. Laurie's summary of LSD's "observable physical" and neurological effects, and of their probable causes, is the sort of public statement for which an "expert" like Dr. Louria or Mr. Barron substitutes his private rhetoric of interdiction or praise; and so we can be thankful for the modesty of the amateur:

Goosepimples, stronger tendon reflexes—the knee jerk, for example—and enlarged irises are the most noticeable. Less often the drug causes nausea and muscle pain, symptoms interpreted on no very good evidence by dynamic psychiatrists as mechanisms of defence against ego loss in unstable personalities. Neurologically, its effects are complicated. Although it inhibits signals in the optic nerves of cats, it also produces "alerting cortical responses" and lowers thresholds

for vision and hearing. One interesting effect is synaesthesia, the transference of impressions from one sense to another. Thus LSD subjects can hear hands clapping as showers of sparks, or feel a mild electric shock on the forearm as a bolt through the whole body. These phenomena seem to suggest that the drug breaks down the processes that limit and channel sense impressions in the deeper interpretative layers of the brain, allowing neuronal excitation to spread indiscriminately sideways. Curiously, although one of the commonest effects of the drug is the overwhelming impact of all sense impressions, it also appears to produce many of the signs of sensory deprivation. This may be because it reduces the filtering effect of the outer layers of the brain and so effectively prevents any useful information getting through at all. One might compare the brain to an office organization that handles vast quantities of small pieces of information, at each level summarizing, correlating and passing on this material to the next level for action and further condensation. Finally, the head of the organization—or the consciousness—is presented with one simple image. But LSD disrupts this delicate process; the millions of small messages pour straight through and completely swamp interpretation. Perhaps one could carry the analogy further, and say that the consciousness, in the manner of overworked executives, tends to seize at random on one or two messages and concentrates its attention on them, thus giving the impression of increased perception.

This is the way things are or on the evidence strongly seem, says Mr. Laurie; and his act of attention throws into comic relief the image of a Louria or a Barron or an Altizer face to face with his own limits, pastorally crooning obsolete airs into the echoing passages of his inner nose.

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

How Many Ways of Looking at a Poem?

WALLACE STEVENS FOUND THIRTEEN WAYS of looking at a blackbird; Kipling affirmed that there were thirty-nine ways of constructing tribal lays. Kipling said, and Stevens (I think) implied, that any one way may be just as good as any other. I wish there could be as many ways of writing criticism. If there were, they would surely have been found by now; for no one will deny that in sheer volume of production, in anthep industriousness, literary criticism is at present in a very flourishing state. And in self-esteem: one of its practitioners, who is among the authors I am now to consider, affirms with confidence that "modern criticism . . . in many respects is the most subtle and penetrating the world has yet known." Such accolades we modern critics are always bestowing on ourselves, even when we don't formulate our satisfaction as plainly as that; we indicate how important we believe our activity to be by the weightiness of our tone and, in many cases, the length of our volumes and the clotted involutions of our thought and our prose. Readers, we imply, may be fairly expected to spend much good time, and take a deal of trouble, over our stuff: great may be the effort, but greater still will be the reward.

And, strange to say, our claim seems on the whole to be admitted. Literary criticism is regarded with much reverence. You don't find nowadays that running fire of guerilla sniping with which the creative writers of the eighteenth century kept the "Criticks" properly humbled. No Johnson of the twentieth century, if we had one, would inform us that "criticism is one of the ancillary or subordinate arts" or pull down our vanity in this style:

Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at very little expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may, by mere labour, be obtained, is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a critic.

No: it seems that the only modern protesters against the Critics are to be found among those who are quite outside the egghead pale, those hard-working tycoons of the drugstore paperback trade, such as James Jones and Harold Robbins, whose torsos and triumphs, incomes and irascibilities, are celebrated in *Life* magazine. *They* protest:

"Critics don't create literature," snaps Robbins, "the readers do. Critics can create a cult, like Kerouac, but they can't make people stay there. Who's reading Kerouac today?"

"Some of them didn't review the book at all," Jones sputters. "They just said I was a bad writer, bad grammar, blah, blah, blah . . ."

Messrs. Robbins and Jones, snapping and sputtering away, are doubtless unaware of it, but they are in fact in a sound old tradition. (I am not affirming this of their *books*.) But it is a tradition which, but for them, is virtually dead. I don't know why. Is it because almost all literary critics are now academics; and hence they put into their work (all unknowingly) the tone of teacher to pupil—and their readers, also unknowingly, respond with the attitudes of pupil to teacher? (I don't mean, always, reverence. Tedium is another pupillary response.) Or is it because so many creative writers also are now dwellers in, dependents on, the groves of academe—live next office-door to their critics, are in a state of symbiosis with them, and so do not feel, or dare not express, the old hostility?

—But to return to my first point. Criticism has not in fact evolved a great variety of "ways of looking." No one has yet accepted the challenge posed by William Arrowsmith: "Suppose scholars should become as inventive as good artists in their attempt to find a form adequate to their knowledge or educational mission. . . ." Perhaps the challenge is just not acceptable—criticism and scholarship simply cannot be as flexible in their forms as other kinds of writing. However this may be, if these works of criticism on English poetry¹ which I am now going to criticize are reasonably representative, there are only three basic forms of critical writing.

The first is biographical. Its concern is with the writer's life and personality; any illumination it may shed on his works is to come incidentally. The work is the product and extension of the writer's personality; an understanding of the latter is necessary, or at least helpful, to the understanding of the work. Such must be the theory of this way of criticism. Examples of it here are Sherbo's book on Christopher Smart, Maisie Ward's on Browning, and Amanda Ellis's

¹ CHRISTOPHER SMART, SCHOLAR OF THE UNIVERSITY, by *Arthur Sherbo*. Michigan State. \$8.50. ROBERT BROWNING AND HIS WORLD, by *Maisie Ward*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$8.50. REBELS AND CONSERVATIVES, by *Amanda Ellis*. Indiana University. \$10.00. EMINENT DOMAIN, by *Richard Ellmann*. Oxford University. \$4.95. A TRADITION OF POETRY, by *John Buxton*. St. Martin's. \$6.95. SPENSER'S IMAGES OF LIFE, by *C. S. Lewis*. Cambridge University. \$3.95. WORDSWORTH, A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH, by *Melvin Rader*. Oxford University. \$6.10. KEATS AND THE MIRROR OF ART, by *Ian Jack*. Oxford University. \$10.10. DRYDEN'S POETRY, by *Earl Miner*. Indiana University. \$10.00. UNPREMEDITATED VERSE, by *Wayne Shumaker*. Princeton University. \$6.00. FROM THE GREAT DEEP, by *Clyde de L. Ryals*. Ohio University. \$5.50.

Rebels and Conservatives, which is concerned with Wordsworth, Coleridge, and their circle. Partially but not wholly biographical are Ellmann's *Eminent Domain*, on Yeats and the poets he was influenced by and influenced, and Buxton's *A Tradition of Poetry*.

The second form comes under the sign of "history of ideas." It sees the works criticized primarily as examples of certain intellectual and aesthetic interests which formed part of the poet's environment. It assumes that most poems are unlikely to be adequately comprehended, and therefore appreciated, unless that environment is known and understood. It therefore concentrates the bulk, perhaps the whole, of its attention on those elements in the poetry which are clearly most susceptible to such treatment. Examples of this kind here are C. S. Lewis' work on Spenser, Ian Jack's on Keats, and Melvin Rader's on Wordsworth.

The third form assumes that basically a poem is neither a personal nor a historical by-product, but an aesthetic construction which aims at total self-sufficiency. The perfection of this aim is perhaps unattainable, but the nearer a poem gets there the better it is. And therefore the most useful criticism is that which stresses the independence of the poem and makes as little use as it can of any kind of extraneous matter. The contemporary practice of this form, which descends from the New Criticism of the 20's and 30's, tends to use a vocabulary with a flavour of scientific linguistics and to be "descriptive" in a manner also reminiscent of that discipline. Examples here are Miner's book on Dryden, Shumaker's on *Paradise Lost*, and Ryals' on Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. All these make use of the "history of ideas" form as well.

It would be very naive to argue that one way is "better" than the rest. We can assume only two principles: that the object of all ways should be to further the enjoyment and understanding of the poetry, and that each way has its appropriate criterion. Of the biographical way, the criterion is *relevance*. Nothing you relate about the poet should be incapable of application to the poetry. This sounds simple, and easy. In fact, it's neither. For it often happens that information factually quite close to the poem may have no bearing at all on the poem's real nature and therefore no relevance. Conversely, information which seems remote from the poem may illuminate it. What appears to make the difference is whether the critic has been really penetrated, fascinated, by the poetry, or whether he is using the poetry merely as part of the information available about the poet. Many biographical critics do this, without always knowing it. An example: in Amanda Ellis's *Rebels and Conservatives* you get this:

When they passed Westminster Bridge early one morning, Dorothy found in the sleeping city something of Nature's calmness. "The houses," she wrote in her journal, "were not overhung by their

cloud of smoke. . . ." In his sonnet, "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 2, 1802," Wordsworth wrote:

This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning . . .

The information is quite accurate, and obviously "close" to the poem; but it doesn't even begin to tell one why the poem is one of the greatest in the language. Much more relevant would be the information that Wordsworth crossed the bridge on the *top* of a stage-coach—and therefore saw the view downstream as from a height. (Wordsworth himself knew *that* was relevant: he tells us the fact in the poem's subtitle.) An example of the opposite is a passage in Sherbo's book on Christopher Smart which describes one of Smart's crazier expedients for keeping himself solvent: his performing as "Mother Midnight" in a popular farcical entertainment,

donning the robes of an old woman, speaking orations and occasional verse of all kinds, playing on the kettle-drums, and, in general, clowning before the throngs who came to the Castle Tavern . . .

That has no special association with any of Smart's work, but it does make immediately more poignant and comprehensible a poem like *Jubilate Agno*, with its willingness to be sublime-and-ridiculous simultaneously and its crazy defiance of Augustan decorum. The sign of a good piece of biographical criticism seems to be this: even through a mass of details dull or trivial in themselves, it preserves a tautness and unity which derive from that perhaps unmentioned centre, the biographer's conviction that his subject was a real and interesting writer. (The prototype is Boswell's *Johnson*: however far the book may stray from Johnson's writings, one knows that Boswell never forgot his reverence for his subject's genius.)

By this standard, I have no hesitation in affirming that Arthur Sherbo's *Christopher Smart* and Richard Ellmann's *Eminent Domain* are successes, whereas Maisie Ward's *Robert Browning* and Amanda Ellis' *Rebels and Conservatives* are failures. Both of the latter pair are always losing tension by a multiplicity of pointless detail; Miss Ellis' does contain an impressive quantity of knowledge about "Dorothy and William Wordsworth and their Circle," as its subtitle puts it, but I wish that more of this were relevant to the theme suggested in the main title. For no subject is more fascinating than the criss-crossing pulls and strains of that tremendous and seminal epoch of war and revolution, as they worked on the writers of the time. But little of that comes through the ceaseless patter of tiny facts:

Horace, who was an officer in the 26th Cameronians, died in the

China campaign of 1842; Paul Frederick, likewise in the army, served in the Sikh War and later in the Indian Mutiny; he became a military secretary to General Galloway in the Maori War and received a grant of land in New Zealand. There, he died in 1894.

What *that* is supposed to tell us about De Quincey (whose sons these worthies were) is beyond my comprehension. A note or appendix is the only place for it, if it has to be anywhere at all; as part of the narrative, it merely holds up, distracts, is evidence that the work has no clear central theme by which irrelevance can be checked.

The biographical successes do have such a theme. That is why they are successes. The theme of Sherbo's book is that the really fateful event of Smart's life was his decision to abandon his fellowship at Cambridge—and the sheltered, even, torpid life it could give him—in favour of the cut-throat squalor of eighteenth-century Grub Street, for which his mental instability and disastrous proneness to alcohol rendered him peculiarly unfit. I found this theme convincing—and relevant to more than Smart. It was relevant to Johnson also, who was driven by poverty from Oxford, and to Gray, who elected to stay all his life in a Cambridge which he despised. It is relevant to many today—the choice between the stimulating insecurity of the *vie de Bohème* and the peaceful dependence of academe. Nowadays the poets' choice seems mostly for the latter. Poets have gained thereby: I am not sure that poetry has. Smart at least is a fascinating example of a poet who was quite worthless when he was sane, solvent and sober, and who showed his real genius only when he was mad, penniless, and drunk. Gray is the obverse—isn't he a potentially great poet reduced by security to dilettantism, infertility, and silence at last? The eighteenth century poses this contrast with peculiar starkness, for its academe was more torpid, and its Grub Street more ruthless, than their modern equivalents.

Ellmann's *Eminent Domain* explores the literary radiations from one great writer, Yeats, on certain of his contemporaries and successors: first, what he took from Wilde, then what he gave—and took back again, sometimes—to and from Joyce, Pound, Eliot and Auden. It makes an absorbing study of a group of writers all of whom, except perhaps Auden, seem already Olympians: remote, more than life-size, immensely potent, in their faults no less than their virtues. And these were certainly the men who made modern writing in English what it is. It is possible to wonder if in the *very* long run these will seem the true giants; I suspect that when the last ripples of influence from the stones they threw have died down, Hardy and James will stand above them, by virtue of a certain hard integrity which will show up an element of *posturing* in these others: but that is certainly a long-range speculation. In the meantime, Ellmann's book will tell you how they acted, interacted, and reacted.

The "tradition of poetry" which John Buxton's book of that title explores is the tradition of the amateur verse-maker, courtier or gentleman, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it does so through eight essays on poets from Sir Thomas Wyatt in the early sixteenth century to Lady Winchilsea in the early eighteenth. Buxton's essays, unfortunately, resemble too closely much of the poetry they are concerned with: they are pleasant, dim, genteel and forgettable. When, on one or two occasions, he ventures judgments outside the range limited by those qualities, I am not impressed. To suggest a likeness, on *any* ground, between Shakespeare's last plays and Drayton's pastorals, and to quote words which Shakespeare put in the mouth of a foolish and pedantic schoolmaster (Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*) as expressive of Shakespeare's own views on poetry, are not procedures inspiring of confidence.

Of the second way of criticism, that of the "history of ideas," the criterion must be *priority*. For the danger of this method is that of becoming too interested in the poetry under discussion as an example of this or that intellectual tendency, too occupied in expounding the ideas in the poetry, until unconsciously the critic is responding to a poem as if it were a treatise of philosophy or theology or politics or what not; he forgets that in truth the poem is of a quite different genre of writing, however much of the material it uses may derive from those fields. This is the fact to be given first priority. One poem may well be an interesting specimen of Renaissance Platonism, or another a good example of the impact of Darwin on a "second-rate, sensitive," mid-Victorian mind: but that is not why they are still alive (if they are), and all explication of their content must be subordinated to awareness of this.

C. S. Lewis' *Spenser's Images of Life* is a posthumous work, compiled by Alistair Fowler from Lewis' notes for a series of undergraduate lectures on Spenser. As such, it is probably unfair to judge it as if it were a finished work by Lewis. But it is characteristically Lewisian—sufficiently so to have tempted me to try to decide just why, in the last analysis, I have always found the work of this original and powerful mind to be radically flawed, not finally enlightening. Only a bigot would deny Lewis' qualities: I found by chance lately that Leslie Fiedler cites *The Allegory of Love* as one of the influences behind his own *Love and Death in the American Novel*—and any work which can influence another work so different from itself must have unusual power. Lewis was no pedant; he wrote for the common reader, not for fellow-specialists, and he never lost hold of the conviction that the only good reason for reading the literature of the past is to help us to live better and happier lives in the present. But if I think of his works in his chosen field, that of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, I cannot honestly say that they are among those which helped me to feel I really understood what the minds and

souls of those ages were like—as living entities in their own day and sphere. Huizinga and Burckhardt—even Coulton in his craggy combative way—gave me that sense of understanding: but not Lewis. And the reason seems to be that Lewis did not see Middle Ages and Renaissance as the modern ages they once were—he saw them as happy contrasts to the modern age which *he* lived in, and hated. In this book on the *Faerie Queene*, the symptom of this is a refusal, perhaps an inability, to see the poem “as in itself it really is.” What he sees are ideas in the poem, and even these he adapts to serve his own rather forced and embarrassing cheeriness:

In sum, then, evil is solemn, good is gay. Evil means starvation, good glows with what Blake calls “the lineaments of gratified desire” . . . Evil is tired, good is full of vigour. The one says, Let go, lie down, sleep, die; the other, All aboard! kill the dragon, marry the girl, blow the pipes and beat the drum, let the dance begin.

This is just assertion—assertion that Spenser was saying the things that Lewis says. What is needed, and is not given, is demonstration—that Spenser’s poem is creating an imaginative world in which those things are embodied. There is an interesting, symptomatic encounter here with a critic of a rival school—D. K. Traversi in the largely “Leavisian” *Pelican Guide to English Literature*. (Lewis, according to academic gossip, was imported from Oxford to Cambridge in an effort to counteract the fell Leavisian influence in the latter university.) Lewis catches out Traversi in a factual error—he had quoted a description of Diana as if it were of Britomart—and spends three pages dilating on the enormity of this error. What he does not observe is that this in no way invalidates—does not even touch—Traversi’s critical point, that the “decorative sensuality” of the description seems to run counter to the allegorical intention. Traversi, that is, whether right or wrong, is making a comment on the quality of the poetry as it strikes him; Lewis is telling us what he believes to have been the poet’s intention, and is leaving unasked the question whether the writing carries it out.

Perhaps I am prejudiced against books on the *Faerie Queene*, since that is a poem I have always found plainly unreadable. This prejudice, at least, will not operate against the two other works of the “history of ideas” kind, since Wordsworth and Keats are poets I enjoy. But Melvin Rader’s *Wordsworth, a Philosophical Approach* does strike me as heavy going, and I could not feel that it added anything to whatever understanding and appreciation of Wordsworth I had already attained to. It is a somewhat pedestrian account of Wordsworth’s philosophical affinities: how he was immensely influenced by Coleridge, how he took something from the “associationists” and something else from Locke, how he was strongly prejudiced against Rousseau and had picked up through Coleridge some Kantian no-

tions, and so on—but the trouble is that Wordsworth was *not* a philosopher, his mind was not excited by concepts, and again and again the philosophical gloss seems relevant only to his worst poetry, never to his best. When he writes such plodding and lifeless stuff as this—

To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself—
I would give utterance in numerous verse

—it is perhaps germane to remark that the language is “difficult to reconcile with a sensationist epistemology”: but the comment will not save the poetry. Conversely, the great lines which record the mystical experience he underwent when he found he had “crossed the Alps”—

Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there

—are in no way illuminated by allusions to “Platonic transcendentalism.” The concrete experience was everything to Wordsworth's poetry: the abstract explanation of it, nothing.

On the other hand, I thought that Ian Jack's *Keats and the Mirror of Art* was an illuminating and valuable book, because it deals with an area directly relevant to a great deal of the poet's finest work. All of us, I suppose, must have noted how much of Keats's poetry is pictorial in quality, and if we have read his letters and know anything about the circle he lived in, we will have noted also his deep interest in the visual arts and close associations with many who practised them. What Jack's book attempts is to answer the question “how deeply was the poetry of Keats indebted to the visual arts?”—and it answers this question very satisfactorily. Jack demonstrates that in the early years of the nineteenth century the arts were enjoying something of a boom in England, that there was a general conviction that an English Renaissance was at hand, and that Keats himself, mainly through his friendships with Hunt, Haydon and Hazlitt, shared this passion and this conviction. And then there came the arrival of the Elgin Marbles in London, the revealing to English travellers of Napoleon's artistic loot in the Louvre, and the opening to the general public of many private collections—in all of which excitements Keats shared, directly or by proxy. The connection with his poetry was direct and vital. The “Ode to Autumn,” for instance, “could not have been written before the development of English landscape-painting in the later eighteenth century.” There are also some interesting critical questions which Jack's book raises by the way. How much did it matter that most of Keats's artistic idols—notably Haydon—were in fact very inferior artists? (Not at all, I

would say. The stimulus was what he needed; he could be critical and discriminating about his own art.) What truth is there in the accusation of escapism—that Keats turned to art and mythology as refuges from, rather than as helps in, the life of nineteenth-century London? (Some truth, certainly: but it was *willed* escape, from which he fully intended to return.)

And what is the criterion for the third kind of criticism, that which stresses the poem's independence? *Humility* would be my answer. By this I mean the critic's humility, not before God or other critics, but before the poem itself—his willingness to restrain his own cleverness and creativeness and remain firmly within the limits of the poem he is analysing. For the besetting sin of this criticism's modern practitioners is undoubtedly that of excessive cerebration—of a quasi-scientific passion for finding out everything, saying everything, which is often signalled, in fact, by use of the language of science. For examples:

Secondly, I wish to test the belief that our recognition of affective and perceptual content will profit from the adoption of approaches likely to bring wanted data into prominence.

Having in two chapters considered *Paradise Lost* as a whole and in a third analyzed briefly some of the ways in which nondiscursive parts of the author's psyche contributed to producing it, I want next to attempt some experiments in histology.

Both these come from Wayne Shumaker's *Unpremeditated Verse*, from which I took also that praise of modern criticism which I cited at the beginning of this chronicle. Earl Miner's book on *Dryden's Poetry* is much less prone to such jargon, but it does make excessive use of a favorite, and significant, metaphor of contemporary criticism—that of *structure*. "The structural inner relations of the poem"; "careful structures grounded in figurative language"; "structure and thematic development"; "structural procedure"; "structural logic"; "special structural strategy"; "structural articulation": the poor word is being driven very near to the border of meaninglessness. The intention, perhaps unconscious, of such language is clearly to present the poem as if it were like a building—an objective construction made according to rules and formulae, something which one can, as it were, walk round and in, make a ground-plan of, measure and test—and all this even though the maker of the "building" may have left you not the faintest indication of what he meant by it and how he thought he had made it. (Even if he has dropped some hints, you can always ignore them, intoning as you do so the sacred phrase "intentionalist fallacy!")

Perhaps I should try to make clear just what I am objecting to. I

am certainly not suggesting that poems are no more than confessional outpourings, shapeless and incoherent. But it remains the unavoidable, incurable fact about literature that it uses the same medium, language, as we (and the poet himself) use in all our concerns—everyday, intimate, practical, emotional. Nothing can give to work in such a medium the complete detachability implied in the metaphor of *structure* or the potentiality of being dissected and microscopically scrutinized implied in the metaphor of *histology*. No work made out of words by a human being is ever totally knowable. And the danger of using a method which seems to claim the opposite is that of believing the claim your metaphors are making (for language *acts* on you, the critic, quite as much as on all its other users), and then of filling the unknowable areas with your own inventions.

I am quarrelling here with a tendency which I detect in these books much more than with the books themselves; all of which, in fact, I found interesting and valuable. Shumaker's thesis about *Paradise Lost* is that the poem is much less dry and abstract than its denigrators tend to think, but has a great deal of sensuousness, "is highly physical," and is always making its effects by a process of *animism*—"turns of speech characteristic of 'primitive' thought habits." Shumaker, in fact, is attempting something similar to what was attempted in Christopher Ricks's book *Milton's Grand Style*—demonstrating that the poem is much more responsive to twentieth-century aesthetics than Pound, Eliot and Leavis had thought it. And this, to my mind, is the right way to defend it. No use showing, as C. S. Lewis tried to, that its theology is sound: no use wrestling yet again with those exhausted arguments about Satan's nobility and God's repulsiveness. Show that the thing is a passionate, extraordinary, above all *human* poem—and you may get somewhere.

Earl Miner on *Dryden's Poetry* is a survey of Dryden's work in chronological sequence. He makes considerably more use than Shumaker of historical information—almost inevitably for the critic of Dryden, who is the most public of poets. But, as Miner says, the real problem with Dryden is how he varied the relationship between his "personality and public experience," in what different proportions his poems balance the public event, common to all, and the individual Dryden's grief, anger, triumph, amusement, or religious devotion. For the average modern reader, Dryden is probably much less moving than Milton or Pope; the sense of personality is so much weaker that the dependence on knowledge of contemporary events seems correspondingly greater. And in truth it is: but Miner goes some way toward demonstrating that the living personality was not totally submerged.

The last of these works, Clyde de L. Ryals' *From the Great Deep*, achieved for me what Lewis' work on the *Faerie Queene* did not achieve: it made me feel that a poem I had always found unreadable might be worth another try. The poem is Tennyson's *Idylls of the*

King—of all his work, I suppose, the most thickly encrusted in general estimation with the most unrevivable of Victoriana. That dreadful dedication to Prince Albert! that even more dreadful envoy to the Queen! But Ryals establishes that Tennyson had a very clear notion of what he was trying to do—to “translate traditional subjects into modern terms”; that he uses the idyll form with precise understanding of the genre, not as a piece of sentimental archaism; and that the whole poem was Tennyson’s vehicle for what he “had to say about art, morality, and the whole spiritual life of man.” And what he had to say had no Victorian complacency. It repudiated the hopefulness of *In Memoriam*; it rejected the Carlylean gospel of the Hero who would save; it proclaimed that in the end the world was “irredeemable.” I found this account very convincing: all that remains for me (but I fear it will prove quite a big “all”) is to overcome the language, the form, in which Tennyson chose to say what he “had to say.” That “Victorian Gothic” fancy-dress, that self-conscious Ye Olde Camelotte Stuffle—weren’t they right who in Tennyson’s own time protested against such archaisms—Ruskin, Hopkins, Edward Fitzgerald—and wouldn’t Tennyson have done better if he had tried, like Hopkins in England and Baudelaire in France, to write of the nineteenth century’s agony in the nineteenth century’s language?

I doubt if I shall change: but at least this book is going to make me try.

ANTHONY HECHT

Writers’ Rights and Readers’ Rights¹

MARIANNE MOORE HAS WRITTEN A VERY FUNNY fantasy poem called “Dream,” in which she imagines that Johann Sebastian Bach and his family are given appointments as artists in residence at Northwestern. And so, in thinking about her book, and some of the others here, and about some problems they raise, I have indulged in a little fantasy of my own. Let us suppose that in some Dickensian lawyer’s

¹ THE COLLECTED POEMS OF MARIANNE MOORE. Macmillan/Viking \$8.50. SELECTED SHORTER POEMS 1927-1957, by *W. H. Auden*. Random House. \$7.50. WODWO, by *Ted Hughes*. Harper & Row. \$4.95. THE BLUE SWALLOWS, by *Howard Nemerov*. University of Chicago. \$4.50. POEMS 3, by *Alan Dugan*. Yale University. \$4.50/\$1.45. DYING: AN INTRODUCTION, by *L. E. Sissman*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$4.50.

office the literary remains of the late Clement Moore were brought to light, and it were discovered that he had gone on revising his masterpiece up to the very end, and in some unsuspected codicil to his will enjoined his publishers henceforward to issue only the final version, of which the first line now ran,

Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the flat

It gives rise to visions of an illicit publishing house, underground but powerful, that would earn fame and wealth by catering to a sentimental preference for the early version. There would be false covers, and difficulties at customs, and trials. Leslie Fiedler would testify. The problem, however, is serious, and has to do with the rights of writers and readers; it particularly concerns the volumes of Miss Moore and W. H. Auden which are under review.

Miss Moore's volume is called, "The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore." On the inside of the dust jacket, however, the publishers hedge a bit by saying that these are "all the poems she is willing to preserve." They add, "Miss Moore has made several changes, omitting only one poem and restoring one that was not in the *Collected Poems*." But if a reader thinks he is only going to be out one poem, he is wrong. Miss Moore has her own caveat, which serves as an epigraph to the book: "Omissions are not accidents." And so, we come to notice that among the poems that do not appear are, "Roses Only," "Black Earth," "Is Your Town Nineveh," "The Bricks Are Fallen Down," and "Like a Bullrush." Moreover, while she has occasionally added beautifully to a familiar and well-known poem, more often than not she has cut and trimmed in radical and merciless ways. The famous poem called "Poetry," for instance, is reduced to its first three lines. Fortunately, the full, original version is preserved in the notes. But not all the poems have been treated so kindly. In some the elisions are indicated by a row of dots, as in "The Buffalo" and "Nine Nectarines" (in the second of these the dots stand for the omission of three and a half eleven-line stanzas—which do not appear in the notes.) But the omissions are not always indicated so clearly, or even at all, and there is nothing in the text or the notes of "The Frigate Pelican," for instance, to suggest that six and a half nine-line stanzas had been pared away from it.

Personally, I wish Miss Moore had been more sparing of her work, and as an admiring reader I feel that I have some rights in the matter. Her poems are partly mine, now, and I delight in them because they exhibit a mind of great fastidiousness, a delicate and cunning moral sensibility, a tact, a decorum, a rectitude, and finally and most movingly, a capacity for pure praise that has absolutely biblical awe in it.

She (and Mr. Auden, too, as it will appear) however much I may

wish to take exception to the changes they have made, have provided a field day for Ph.D. candidates for years to come, who can collate versions and come up with theories about why the changes were made. I suspect, for instance, that "Poetry" is Miss Moore's most widely anthologized poem, and she may feel that it has been studied and taught to death, and the present version may be her wry comment on this. But there are other problems that are not so easily explained. For example, T. S. Eliot long ago pointed out her delicate use of *light* rhyme, sometimes internally where it might not be noticed. I am delighted to see that in the present version of "Camellia Sabina" the seventh line of every stanza is divided in two, making the internal rhyme more visible and audible. For Miss Moore's rhyme words do not often fall at Caesuras, and in this poem she rhymes the article "a"—which we normally speak as if it rhymed with "uh-uh"—with nasegay and holiday. This is all to the good. But consider some fooling around she has done in the poem called "The Hero." It is in syllabic verse, in six nine-line stanzas. The first line of every stanza has ten syllables, the eighth fourteen, and the ninth four; and these three lines not only rhyme with each other—they continue the same rhyme through every stanza of the whole poem. Or, rather, they did. Miss Moore has tampered with them, and now the last line of the third stanza (the only irregular final line) has five syllables and no rhyme, or at least no external rhyme, as in all the other cases; and the first line of the fourth stanza has been truncated to eight syllables. And this is by no means the only place in the text where such roughening up of the forms has been done. From a distance of, say, five feet, you wouldn't recognize "Peter." I am puzzled by these changes and have no ready answer, but then this is, happily, no doctoral thesis.

W. H. Auden's book raises similar problems. I am of that generation for whom Auden was a strong and formative influence. I bought the first book of his poems published in America, then in its third printing, in 1937 when I was still in high school. And I remember buying book after book as they came out, always with an excited anticipation of discovery and puzzle and delight, and of learning many things, not all of them about poetry. But most of them were, and because my poetic education was strangely reversed, starting with moderns and working backwards, I discovered from his "Hearing of harvests" what a sestina was. Over all these years his production has been impressively rich and various, and I take pleasure in expressing here my very deep and real sense of gratitude for those volumes which consistently showed daring, invention, wit and an almost unbelievable grace; and which purely by the effect of the intelligence of their voice, persuaded me of ideas that I had never encountered or seriously entertained before, or thought dimly heretical or shocking.

I am sure I am not the only one to have been greatly educated by him, but I mention it because the education has made for a special familiarity with his work (which I feel for the work of only a few other poets), and I have been able to come back to it as the years pass with unfailing pleasure. And so I have a proprietary sense about many poems; to be sure, they are his, but they have become mine, too, and they were some of the best and most gratifying parts of my education. So that the scruples with which he edits and emends his work would very much disturb me if I could not go back to the original texts which I have all but by heart.

The present volume restores the poems to their original order of appearance, which the *Collected Poetry* of 1945 undertook so pointedly to flout. In his Foreword, Auden explains this very reasonably as follows: "At the age of thirty-seven I was still too young to have any sure sense of the direction in which I was moving, and I did not wish critics to waste their time, and mislead readers, making guesses about it which would almost certainly turn out to be wrong. Today, nearing sixty, I believe that I know myself and my poetic intentions better and, if anybody wants to look at my writings from an historical perspective, I have no objection." And yet the wary reader will notice not only some omissions and alterations in the text, which I will come to in a moment, but some additions as well; and he might come to the odd conclusion that the poet is adding from both ends to an already impressive corpus of work by writing new "early" poems as well as continuing in his current productions. While neither the Foreword nor the publishers have explained this, I have heard quite reliably that the poems appearing here for the first time (they are mostly brief, they are all delightful, and it is good to have them) are from notebooks and journals dating from the periods indicated by the subdivisions of this volume.

The doctoral candidates will have just as rich and plentiful a chance with Mr. Auden's work as with Miss Moore's, but some of the initial groundwork has already been done for them by Professor Monroe K. Spears, who has been so up-to-date as to provide a new preface to his excellent book, *The Poetry of W. H. Auden: The Disenchanted Island*, identifying the discarded poems. Among these are some very famous ones indeed, and two of them are "Petition" ("Sir, no man's enemy") and "Septemeber 1, 1939." Both of these are rejected because Mr. Auden feels them to be "dishonest." In his Foreword he remarks, "A dishonest poem is one which expresses, no matter how well, feelings or beliefs which its author never felt or entertained. For example, I once expressed a desire for 'New styles of architecture'; but I have never liked modern architecture. I prefer *old* styles, and one must be honest even about one's prejudices." Well, now, is this honest? And if the definition of a dishonest poem is taken seriously, can it be squared with the following famous observa-

tion of T. S. Eliot? "The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him." Is it possible that the poet is being a trifle disingenuous? Of "Petition" it might possibly be objected that as a prayer it asks everything of God and demands nothing of man; but it is hard to believe that if such universal and gratuitous salvation were suddenly to be brought about, and our moral/physical ills were cured and we were made whole and good, that Mr. Auden would regret this because the cure entailed styles of architecture of which he was not fond. As for "September 1, 1939" I shall go on liking it whether Auden does or not, and this is true of several of the others that have gone by the board.

As for revisions, I find myself very grudging about them, too. I seem almost always to prefer the original versions. I am not sure that I could explain why, in the great elegy for Yeats, "O all the instruments agree" is to be preferred to "What instruments we have agree"; perhaps I prefer it the way Auden prefers old styles of architecture. But there are many alterations in poems that have become happily and justly familiar to us all, and I don't yet know how I feel about all the changes, but there are some that I know I regret.

In any case, Auden is an artist like Stravinsky or Picasso; they are not merely breathtakingly various and versatile, but by continuous experimentation and technical daring they have all exhibited in their careers splendid and identifiable "periods" of development, and they are the masters of many idioms. And this book, for all my carping, makes that development abundantly and overwhelmingly clear.

The new book by Ted Hughes is terrifying, marvelous, macabre, and to me at least, not altogether comprehensible. This is not a charge of obscurity in the normal sense; indeed, it may reflect only upon my limitations as a reader. Mr. Hughes is largely concerned with Lawrencian darkneses and other kinds of darkness, and it is possibly a part of his strategy that everything should not be luminously clear. The book is composed of three parts: a section of poems, five short stories and a radio play, and a final section of poems. And the author has said that "the stories and the play may be read as notes, appendix and unversified episodes of the events behind the poems, or as chapters of a single adventure to which the poems are commentary and amplification. Either way, the verse and the prose are intended to be read together, as part of a single work." This may remind some readers of the technique of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, but reading through Hughes's book, I was reminded rather of a commentary I read somewhere on the Circe episode in Homer, suggesting that this was a disguised and sophisticated revelation of the rituals of certain

Mystery Cults in which the initiate was made dramatically and terribly to confront his deepest animal nature. Something of this sort, elemental, harsh and ruthless, but not really bitter, is present, for example in the radio play, which is also strangely dream-like and almost surrealistic. It is set in the First World War, and two soldiers, Sergeant Massey and Ripley, seemingly the only survivors of a company wiped out by shelling, make a long and difficult journey on a secret mission through dangers and a landscape full of ghosts and corpses to a castle occupied by a Queen and her female retinue. The castle is filled with animal noises: the soldiers are invited to a banquet followed by a dance. Both of these events are part of a process of seduction to bestiality, disintegration and death; the sergeant succumbs, Ripley resists, and at the very end somehow makes his way back to his own trenches, feeble and badly wounded, and we are allowed to suppose that the whole episode may have been the fevered fantasy of a wounded and dying man who makes a great last effort to pull himself back to life and safety. This, of course, is a crude and inadequate account. From the first, Hughes has been preoccupied essentially with human strength and weakness due to man's being both part of nature and apart from it by dint of his special human consciousness. This is a familiar theme of the nineteenth-century romantics, but Hughes adopts it to special and terrifying purposes of his own. His is largely a poetry of extreme situations or attitudes or pressures. His deservedly famous animal poems, for instance, are really emblematic of human postures and behavior. And the drama of his poems, indeed, of this whole book, consists in the frightening and insoluble paradox that man at his peril, possibly sometimes at the cost of his life, denies his animal nature, but at the same time that very nature, when it gets out of hand, makes him bestial and hateful and can also kill him. By the same token, man's consciousness, while useful, is also dangerous, and when divorced from his deepest nature is feeble and useless. There is a touching moment in the play when Ripley, full of energy and purpose, is told that he's been shot through the head. It is not the fact of this, but the knowledge or consciousness of it that immediately seems to paralyze him. At the banquet scene, the sergeant eats meat, which is somehow identified with the flesh of his dead comrades and the enemy he has killed. Ripley, on the other hand refuses, announcing that he is a vegetarian. It is true that he survives while the sergeant does not. But earlier in the book this wonderful poem appears, hinting, as it seems to me, at the other side of the picture.

A VEGETARIAN

Fearful of the hare with the manners of a lady,
Of the sow's loaded side and the boar's brown fang,

Fearful of the bull's tongue snaring and rending,
And of the sheep's jaw moving without mercy,

Tripped on Eternity's stone threshold.

Staring into the emptiness,

Unable to move, he hears the hounds of the grass.

There is more variety to this book than I have indicated here, but this seemed a convenient way to get at some central themes and preoccupations of Hughes's work. The poems are all wonderfully vigorous, and often quietly terrifying. They are not all easily accessible, but they are worth careful reading, and they reveal a tough, intricate and sensitive mind. Let it be added that he is not to be outdone by Miss Moore and Mr. Auden in providing literary meat for the textual scholars: in the few months between the British and American publication of this book, a number of radical changes, deletions and additions were made.

SMALL MOMENT

Isaiah 54:7

Death is serious,
 or else all things are serious
 except death. A player who dies
 automatically disqualifies
 for the finals. If there were no death
 nothing could be taken seriously,
 not truth, not beauty, but that is not
 a situation which we need to face.
 Men invented the gods, but they
 discovered death; therefore, although
 the skull is said to grin, the flesh
 is serious, and frowns, for the world
 is not a stage. And the gay spirit, gone
 through wisdom to absurdity,
 welcomes the light that shudders in the leaves
 in all weathers and at any season
 since love, the pure, unique, and useless virtue,
 climbs in the stalk and concentrates this dust
 until it takes the light and shines
 with the fat blood of death. So men say
 that flowers light the sun, and so also
 when Theseus fought Antiope,
 the battlefield became a marriage bed.
 When you have known how this may be
 you have already lived forever,
 forsaken once in a small moment,
 but gathered with great mercies after.

"Small Moment" is from Howard Nemerov's new book; there is no

other living poet I can think of capable of conveying with the same ease the sad, majestic, Lucretian austerity of these lines, the utter lack of concession, the pure indifference to what might pass for consolation. And the final lines are a characteristic puzzle; they are borrowed from the Lord's promise to His people: "*For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.*" The poem, therefore, may constitute an ironic commentary on the biblical passage, but it may also be, without irony, an interpretation of it, saying, in effect, this is the way, and the only way, those lines are properly to be understood. The irony then becomes a dramatic irony: what has been promised is brought to pass, but not in the manner that was expected.

This poem is from Nemerov's seventh book of poems, and there is nothing on the dust jacket to indicate he has ever been awarded a major prize. If this is true, it is shocking, for he continues to be one of the very best poets writing in English. His poems are not normally marked by the extreme severity of the one above; but I chose it anyway because it seemed to me absolutely awesome. More commonly, his poems are compassionate, witty, and immensely civilized. This last word is not now regarded as a kindly one to use about a poet. When a reviewer employs it, usually he is coming to a covert understanding and confederation with the reader by signifying that there is something perhaps effete or less than red-blooded about the poet; and throwing his arm casually about the reader's shoulder, in the manner of a friendly Herman Goering, he is hinting, with a sly wink, that when the word "civilized" comes up, he and his buddy will have their Lügers ready. I hasten to say that I mean nothing of this sort. I mean rather that Nemerov in his poetry shows himself to be clear-headed, unillusioned and affectionate; wry, critical, often funny, and just as often deeply moving. Which is to say that he presents us with a highly intelligent and flexible viewpoint which is busily inspecting what is constantly passing for "civilization" right before our eyes. And there is not much that escapes notice. There is scarcely another poet who can show us so well how futile and ridiculous we are. I trust that the proper, and somewhat negligent, Foundations and Prize Committees will take due notice of this important book.

If Nemerov's poems are often clear-eyed and accusing, they are ultimately benevolent. But the poems of Alan Dugan come nearer to a deep bitterness. They are enormously skillful and terse, and have been carved out in an idiom which Dugan has made entirely and identifiably his own. It is a strange but effective juxtaposition of lofty poetic diction and straight, unpolished, low-down vernacular. When his aim is satiric, as, for example, in "Self-Exhortation On Military Themes," this double-tone can obviously be used ingeniously to exhibit the cheapness and transparency of Noble Postures. But this is not the only way he uses it, and this book is by no means a

simple confrontation of "poetic" shams and ugly truths. Dugan is at least as much attracted by the possibilities of grandeur as by the need to confess disappointment; and I would be willing to bet that there's not a poet writing today who uses the exclamatory "Oh" more frequently. A quick count in this book turned up twenty-four. The diction is often noble ("... it's in the Close of life/ that towering Virtù happens . . .") but is often also in danger of conscious self-ridicule. And the sort of ruthlessness entailed in this provides not only the tone but the substance of self-laceration involved in many of these poems. In more than a few, the speaker appears as a victim. I must confess that occasionally I found myself put off by what seemed to me a too raw and unadorned self-pity. But there are poems ("Not to Chose"; "Flower Grower in Aquarius"; "Qualifications for Survivors") in which it works beautifully and movingly.

The thoughtful (and obedient) reader who takes my advice to go out right away and buy a copy of *Dying: An Introduction*, by L. E. Sissman, will very soon discover that my warm recommendations of the book are quoted on the dust jacket. Moreover, a few days before I sat down to begin this review, the editor of another journal, seeing that blurb, asked me if I would review the book for him. In view of the fact that literary politics have become a lively industry, it seems to me proper that I begin my remarks about Mr. Sissman's book with a deposition to the effect that I am not a relative of his, neither am I in his employ. I have never even met the man. But I had the good fortune of seeing in advance the typescript of this book, which was submitted to a literary jury on which I served. I set this down out of professional compunction, and as much for the sake of Mr. Sissman's reputation as my own. And having thus dispelled a lot of hasty and malicious conclusions to which suspicious persons might have leapt, I wish also to add that I think Mr. Sissman's book not merely excellent, deft, witty, literate and immensely satisfying, but all the more remarkable in that it is a first book which demands none of the concessions we are willing and happy to make for first books. And since I admire this accomplishment so much, I see no reason why I should not seize every public opportunity to say so. If I were the only one to feel this way, there might be grounds for a raised eyebrow or two, but this is not likely to occur. At least I think Mr. Sissman and I can take our chances.

The book, composed of thirty-nine poems, some of them in several parts, one of them quite long, has a submerged narrative quality that gives to the whole a wonderful and eloquent coherence. It begins with the return from college after his freshman year of a young student, high-spirited, full of good humored self-criticism and a very comic sense of borrowed literary language, to his family's home for the summer holidays. It goes on through the terrors and giddy joys of adolescence to jobs, love affairs, recollections of previous love affairs,

and much else, to end just outside a doctor's office with a gentle and muted and frightening acceptance of mortality. And while the wit is always there, the style or the point of view seems brilliantly to change with the maturity of accumulated experience. I do not by this mean for one minute that the later poems are superior to the earlier; I can best illustrate what I'm getting at by quotation. Here, first, is the last part of a poem in four parts, which recounts the nervous and unskillful preparations leading to what seems to be a first sexual encounter.

Later, as racy novels used to say,
 Later, I turn to see the westering sun
 Through the aïlanthus stipple her tan side
 With yellow coin dots shaped to fit her skin.
 This Sally now does like a garment wear
 The beauty of the evening; silent, bare,
 Hips, shoulders, arms, tresses, and temples lie.
 I watch her as she sleeps, the tapering back
 Rising and falling on the tide of breath;
 The long eyelashes lying on her cheek;
 The black brows and the light mouth both at rest;
 A living woman not a foot away.
 The west wind noses in at the window,
 Sending a scent of soap, a hint of her
 Perfume, and the first onions of the night
 Up the airshaft to where I lie, not quite alone.

This is good enough to speak for itself, but I will labor a point. The excellence of the Wordsworthian adaptation lies not merely in its splendid wit, but in a special aptness to the language and the occasion. For the whole poem is directed to the incredulity of the young man, who cannot quite believe that this is really happening to him, "A living woman not a foot away." And that touching youthful instinct to dress up one's own experience in high-class literary garb has always been a way of making this experience more real to one's self. It must be real, if all those famous men wrote that way and became immortal. Compare this, then, with the following lines from a later stage in the "hero's" development.

We issue from the meat of Pineapple Street,
 Skipping in unison in the jet rain to
 The cadence of our footsteps left behind
 Just momentarily as we bound on
 To water, laughing, soaked, four-legged and
 Three-armed, two-hearted, Siamese, unique,
 And fifty put together. On the Heights,
 We embrace like trenchcoats on a rack at Brooks.

You taste like lipstick, wine, and cigarettes,
And, now quite irrecoverably, you: . . .

The difference between these passages is not merely a difference of dramatic situation; it is that the poet has grasped that difference with the keenest emotional sense of the occasions, and in both cases, with wit and gravity, has set them down.

But I wish to end my comments here on a more personal note. I first read the typescript of this book last summer. Later, the publishers sent me page proofs, asking if I would be willing to write a blurb, and I read the book through again. And then, much later this past winter, I found myself trying to recall a poem I had read somewhere. I had very little to go on—no real language that I could recall, no sense of who the poet was, and I had been reading too much poetry during the year to be able to make even a sensible guess. All I remembered was the haunting melancholy of a city scene with an abandoned public orphanage in it. It hung around, yearning to be identified, and finally, after much aggravation, it came to light when I sat down to Mr. Sissman's book again, prior to writing this review. Here is the end of it. May it haunt you, too.

.....

In our dead neighborhood
Now nothing more can come to any good.

Least of all the Victorian orphanage that still stands
Behind an ironic fence on its own grounds
Diagonally opposite.

The convict children have forsaken it:
In one mad prison break, foiling their guards,
They burst out from its wards—

Long as the Hall of Mirrors, high as a kite,
Carved like a cuckoo clock, capped with grey slate—

Leaving an archive of curses on its walls,
A dado of dirt at hand height in its halls,
And a declivity at each doorsill.

Now the street-Arabian artillery
Has lobbed a brick into each gallery
And opened every window from afar.

Each outer door, ajar,
Is a safe conduct to the rat,
The mouse, the alley cat.

Under its exaggerated eaves,
The orphanage endures. Here nothing leaves,
Nothing arrives except ailanthus trees.

My thirst for the past is easy to appease.

ROBERT GARIS

Elegant Theorizing

LIKE IT OR NOT, MOST LITERARY PEOPLE are involved in literary theory these days, even if only through a recharged antagonism to it, a kind of backlash. And most of us are affirmatively involved, in varying styles and degrees. There is an impressive amount of serious and well-trained temperamental inclination for theoretical thinking—the real thing—though also a fair amount of the direct opposite, the parroting of theoretical gabble. More common, and perfectly harmless, is our casual “keeping-up” with what the smart people are reading and writing; and there is some nervous and guilty catching-up too on the part of those of us who suspect that we haven’t given theoretical concerns a fair trial. And all this makes for an important change in the intellectual climate.

One characteristic kind of influential book of the last generation was Empson’s, the work of a sort of literary “prospector” who claimed to have found a rich vein to mine, ambiguity or double-plot or complex words, and who then discussed a loose collection of examples, with a little desultory theorizing thrown in—the value of the whole enterprise depending frankly on whether or not you thought gold had in fact been discovered. Another kind of influential book was Leavis’, which embodied the whole way in which a powerful and important mind dealt with the literature that mattered to him; the value of this work depended just as frankly on whether or not you thought the mind was in fact powerful and important. Neither Empson nor Leavis was particularly easy to read, but their unsystematic procedures made it easy to dismiss their work if you wanted to; and there were plenty of people who did want to and who then felt perfectly free to say that Empson was a nut and Leavis a crank. But the influential books today are intimidatingly harder to read than the Empson or Leavis kind and also much harder to discount. Their systematic procedures call for a capacity to criticize the coherence of systematic thinking that not all literary people have in their grasp; and these systematic procedures ordinarily use specialized non-literary languages which can’t evoke any honorable response whatsoever from those who haven’t made a patient and disciplined effort to learn them. Literary life has become more arduous, less relaxed, for good or for ill; and it would certainly seem that good would prevail, since it is unlikely that hard work will do anybody any harm.

The backlash against all this isn’t, however, entirely due to laziness; there are legitimate complaints to be made against some critical malpractice that is connected with the new theorizing, though not with

its best practitioners. When literary theory is accompanied and even motivated by a bored refusal to interpret and evaluate particular works of art—"nous avons changé tout cela"—it fosters a sillier, because more deliberate, kind of narrowness than the kind it is trying to correct. Interpretation and judgment always need limbering up, but to *give* them up is to resign from wholeness of response to art and to succumb to mindlessly automatic rebellion against the past. Perhaps the history of *art* is doomed to be the story of perpetual revolution, with antithesis continually liquidating thesis and synthesis infinitely delayed; but the history of literary criticism needn't be so exciting. The past can be built upon. The older generation of criticism really did clarify and refine, and practice, the criterion that Leavis calls "relevance" in literary discussion, and the almost deliberate rebellion from this standard in some currently influential critics is a pure loss. What good does it do to trade in the dowdy old kind of scholarly irrelevance—that inert mass of information about historical background and literary biography and the like—for the latest Parisian model of irrelevance that finds the work of art of laughably minimal interest in comparison with the structure of the artist's mind or of the age?

A more entertaining kind of malpractice comes from the new "village explainers"—I am using Gertrude Stein's crack about Pound: "Ezra was a village explainer which was excellent if you were a village, but if not, not." We have heard some stern remarks about the Anglo-American critics' shocking naiveté about the metaphysics and epistemology of art, and it is conceivable, though to my mind unlikely, that systematic scepticism about the "locus" of the literary object and other such matters will make interpretation and judgment more refined. But the village explainers who have elected the job of waking us from our dogmatic slumber seem to be taking their first baby-steps in systematic scepticism about knowledge and language, and since they are taking them in the melodramatic atmosphere of contemporary European philosophizing it isn't surprising that they lack the quiet and leisure for what might be a more profitable kind of common-sense scepticism, the kind that would ask whether these pleasurable uncertainties about the literary object are improving or even in the slightest degree altering one's actual dealings with particular works of art.

The malpractice in some of Frank Kermode's work is also a matter of his almost deliberate refusal to help us with particular works of art. In *The Sense of an Ending*¹ he brings this refusal to its kind of perfection: by using a declared theoretical intention and a display of special terminology he forms a veneer of apparent intellectual rigor over what is essentially the old elegantly empty bellettrism that *all* modern criticism has been working against. Perhaps, of course, Mr.

¹ THE SENSE OF AN ENDING, by *Frank Kermode*. Oxford University Press. \$5.75.

Kermode aims at nothing beyond the moderately interesting intellectual entertainment that his book does in fact offer, and in that case I must at once declare my bias for literary criticism that is useful.

Mr. Kermode's subtitle is "Studies in the theory of fiction" and early on in his argument he remarks that nobody "has ever tried to relate the theory of literary fictions to the theory of fictions in general," thus identifying the theoretical task he has set for himself. The book doesn't pretend to be thorough-going and exhaustive, nor need it be, and in fact a generous number of relations between these two kinds of fictions are presented. The extra-literary fictions are impressively diverse. The fiction of the Apocalypse is the central and recurrent example, but there are extended accounts of many others: Aquinas' angelology, the Principle of Complementarity, "tick-tock" and other garden-variety fictions of time, Sartrean theories of fiction, and the experiences of a captured British agent in occupied France recorded in Christopher Burney's *Solitary Confinement*. There is a correspondingly impressive diversity of literary fictions—from Homer through Spenser, Wordsworth and Tolstoi to Robbe-Grillet and William Burroughs—and of theorists of literary fiction, from Aristotle to Iris Murdoch and Harold Rosenberg. Wallace Stevens is omnipresent. And there is an impressive diversity of scale and mode in Mr. Kermode's handling of all this. His skillful and apparently accurate summaries of specialized scholarship make more interesting reading than his summaries of things as well-known as Sartre's *La Nausée*, but these are balanced by close analyses of Shakespearian soliloquies and "Resolution and Independence," and a formidably specialized reading, closely argued against opposing interpretations, of Spenser on Mutability. Mr. Kermode completes the range, and at the same time unmistakably fixes his belletristic tone, by over-indulging in that practice of which we are all guilty in some degree, the trick of enriching one's own prose with eloquent quotations from the masters. Mr. Kermode draws particularly heavily from Stevens, whom he often refers to as "the poet" in a usage that reverts to the really palmy days. The illusion created is that we are in the middle of poetry itself; and Mr. Kermode's entire performance as an all-round literary professional is highly accomplished. Yet if the word "performance" is inescapable, this is true less because of the few self-congratulatory overtones that one hears than because there is so little else to listen to. This isn't a book from which much can be learned.

At the beginning I had high hopes; for the opening chapter, which probably represents Mr. Kermode's original inspiration, sets up the project with superb clarity before abandoning all the valuable possibilities the set-up affords. This chapter traces the pattern of the development of the Apocalyptic fiction: the early naive arithmetical predictions of the exact date of the End of the World; the "disconfirmation" when the predicted year passed by without event; the

increasingly influential "clerkly scepticism" about such naive readings; the continuing "need" for *some* "sense of an ending," which, in conjunction with clerkly scepticism produced the more sophisticated fiction that the end of the world was not imminent but immanent, and therefore generated the characteristic modern fiction of apocalypse: continual crisis, continual hope of renovation, continual transition. This is so vivid a paradigm of the way our continual need for fiction must and does compound with our sense of reality that one assents immediately to the theoretical generalizations Mr. Kermode draws from it: the law, for instance, that disconfirmation neither destroys the fiction nor causes much discomfort, since human need can always adapt the fiction to the disconfirming conditions; the law of the increasing sophistication and inwardness of fictions, and so forth. Mr. Kermode then advances an equally clear paradigm for literary fictions, in which generic expectations are built up, then disconfirmed by a frustrating reversal, a peripeteia, which is then absorbed into a "concordant" ending that satisfies the initial expectations without dishonoring the peripeteia. This too is persuasive, and when Mr. Kermode, speaking of the death of Cordelia, notes that "the more daring the peripeteia, the more we may feel that the work respects our sense of reality; and the more certainly we shall feel that the fiction under consideration is one of those which, by upsetting the ordinary balance of our naive expectations, is finding something out for us, something *real*," we seem to be on the threshold of important criticism. For the questions that immediately arise would seem just what Mr. Kermode intends. These questions have to do with the discrepancies between the two paradigms. The kind of disconfirmation experienced on January 1, 1001 by a man who believed the world was literally going to end in the year 1000 is clearly too radical and blunt to tell us much about what constitutes a particularly "daring" peripeteia in a literary fiction; so Mr. Kermode's relation between these two paradigms has posed with considerable clarity and force the question how in fact we do distinguish between more and less valuable disconfirmations in literary fictions. And then Mr. Kermode simply drops the subject, and turns from value to history. After *King Lear* the next discussion is of an "extreme" instance, the novels of Robbe-Grillet, in which the peripeteia is a disconfirmation of linear narrative that begins with the very first sentence. Is this a daring peripeteia through which Robbe-Grillet finds out something real for us? Mr. Kermode's characteristic word "extreme" begs the question and three pages later he discards it completely: Robbe-Grillet's novels "most of us would agree (and it is by a consensus of this kind only that these matters, quite rightly, are determined) to be at least very good." The governessy tone between the parentheses seems almost deliberate, a quotation from Miss Prism: we do make value judgments, Cecily, but we don't talk about *how*. But the point

of relating the two kinds of fiction entirely disappears in this instance if talking about value judgments isn't polite—what else can one possibly derive from the relation? I suppose it isn't polite either to say that some of us are not agreed that Robbe-Grillet's novels are very good: his "clerkly scepticism" about linear narrative and so on seems to me, in his theoretical pronouncements, almost supernaturally naive; and I get no sensation of discovering something real when I read his programmatically perpetual peripeteias. It would be disingenuous to claim that I am eager to be convinced, but that doesn't invalidate my sense that Mr. Kermode ought to be arguing the case and that if he isn't interested in that sort of thing he isn't interested in anything interesting.

On Aquinas' fiction of the *aevum*, which angels inhabit, Mr. Kermode digests the scholarship clearly and readably to show that this invention of a third kind of time—neither eternity nor ordinary successive time but partaking of both—helped people "to think about the sense men sometimes have of participating in some order of duration other than that of the *nunc movens*"; and he calls this human use of Aquinas' special term a "concord-fiction," since it allows us to believe contradictory things. And then he uses the term *aevum* to help us think about Shakespearian tragedy:

the end [of *Lear*] is now a matter of immanence; tragedy assumes the figurations of apocalypse, of death and judgment, heaven and hell; but the world goes forward in the hands of exhausted survivors. Edgar haplessly assumes the dignity; only the king's natural body is at rest. This is the tragedy of sempiternity; apocalypse is translated out of time into the *aevum* . . . We discover a new aspect of our quasi-immortality; without the notion of *aevum*, and the doctrine of kingship as a duality, existing in it and in time, such tragedy would not be possible.

Surely the over-emphasis of "*only* the king's natural body is at rest" destroys what I take to be Mr. Kermode's point that at the end of *Lear* we are in an *aevum* of pain, which is to say that there is both a significant finality and a significant lack of finality, a real end to suffering and yet a real perpetuity of suffering. If Mr. Kermode means instead that we don't feel that Lear's death is a significant and concordant end, then his reading doesn't happen to correspond with mine, for whatever that's worth, but in that case too there's no sense in using the word *aevum* that I can see. But in any event what have we really learned from that formidable word that we didn't know already about the play or about the theory of fiction? *Aevum* is a compendious term but for my taste its value in that respect is eclipsed by its pretentiousness, and this is really unpleasantly true of Mr. Kermode's use of it in talking about *Macbeth*. To say that the first

lines of "If it were done" express Macbeth's wish to perform his act in the *aeuum*, not in time, is to darken counsel—with learning rather than ignorance, to be sure, but that has always been the more efficient way.

The uselessness of Mr. Kermode's discussion of the politics of Yeats, Eliot, Lawrence, Lewis and Joyce is particularly obvious, since the question has been given so much attention recently. Yeats, symptomatically though not surprisingly, is Mr. Kermode's key figure. Here is the basic argument. The Yeatsian fictions are valuable in themselves:

Yeats wrote a good deal about the Last Days as he saw them, the aristocratic Irish knights who would be faithful and true, the end of a broken-down, odious epoch and the start of another, aristocratic, courtly, eugenic. In poetry this is well enough; it enters the mix of our own minds, which are richer for the new ingredients: "A Bronze Head" enlarges the imagery by which we represent to ourselves "This foul world in its decline and fall," and the terrors are newly lighted by the vision of the daughters of Herodias and that insolent fiend, Robert Artisson.

But in his best poetry Yeats was "proof against enchantment by the dream"—that is, he realized his fictions were fictions: in "Sailing to Byzantium" or "The Circus Animals' Desertion" he "understands the tension between a paradigmatic order where the price of a formal eternity is inhumanity, and the world of the dying generations." But when Yeats didn't realize that his fictions were fictions, as in some of the poetry apparently and almost all of the extra-poetic statements, the fictions degenerated into myths, which are pernicious and likely to lead to "the final solution." So we must "make very subtle distinctions between the work itself, in which the fictions are properly employed, and *obiter dicta* in which they are not, being either myths or dangerous pragmatic assertions."

At best these remarks rephrase the merest commonplaces about Yeats, but for the most part they characteristically beg the question they are addressed to. Is the "tension" in "Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Circus Animals' Desertion" the thing to cite? Though these are poems I couldn't do without, the gap between the dying generations and the golden bird, between the circus animals and the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart is at least arguably so great that everything that matters in either life or art pours untouched between the poles. But when one looks to Mr. Kermode for help with the more problematic poems in which the two kinds of fiction really get intertwined, one hears that Yeats' images enter the mix of our minds and so forth. And then after this fluent mush to be terrified by those "subtle distinctions" we have to make! As the sentence reads, it

doesn't seem hard to distinguish between poems and non-poems; but if the sentence is carelessly written, if "the work" means "the real work, the good work," then these subtle distinctions between the poems in which the fictions are being used properly and those in which they are not are exactly the distinctions Mr. Kermode doesn't think it polite to talk about. Fortunately, even this unparalleled equability is not imperturbable, and it is electrifying if not illuminating to hear the sudden virulence of Mr. Kermode's attack on the "dry paradigmatic rant" of "Under Ben Bulben."

About Lawrence, whom Irving Howe in a superb article in *The New Republic* correctly identified as the only one of the group who still makes a direct appeal to young readers and whose fictions might therefore still be in danger of leaking out into the non-literary realm, Mr. Kermode says only this: "Lawrence would be the writer to discuss here, if there were time; apocalypse works in *Woman in Love*, [*sic*; the book is wretchedly proof-read] and perhaps even in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but not in *Apocalypse*, which is failed myth." Any writer is free to choose what he wants to talk about, but then we too are free to judge his choices; Mr. Kermode has discussed Lawrence at length elsewhere, but he has also discussed Yeats at length elsewhere, and in the present instance it is hard to acquit him of avoiding the hard part of the subject.

Then there is this about Joyce: "*Ulysses* alone of these great works studies and develops the tension between paradigm and reality, asserts the resistance of fact to fiction, human freedom and unpredictability against plot. . . . And Joyce, who probably knew more about it than any of the others, was not attracted by the intellectual opportunities or the formal elegance of fascism." It would be idle to try to guess whether a keen distinction is intended between Yeats, who "understands" this tension, and Joyce who "alone . . . studies and develops it," but that's a detail compared to the disconcerting implication that Joyce is the best of all these writers because his artistic procedures were completely continuous with his life-procedures. This implication says that literary fictions are bad unless they lead to good behavior in life, except for some few which for unknown reasons are "well enough" in poetry, doubtless because of the *Altitude* of the imagination. In short, we are back at the beginning of the question which Mr. Kermode is supposed to be studying. But of course he hasn't been "studying" anything at all, or thinking very hard. So the bad logic of the sentence about Joyce's reaction to fascism isn't really surprising either. Joyce's failure to be attracted to fascism would of course only be worth emphasizing if he knew even less than Yeats and the others of its effects at firsthand.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Fiction Chronicle¹

MAKING HASTE BY STANDING STILL is the coolest sort of trend-setting; and it's something the British seem to accomplish much better than their American cousins. This side of the Atlantic, it's Zong ! op art ! Zowie !! black humor !! Blooie !!! structuralism, mixed media, and the book as copulation explosion !!! Meanwhile, ambling down the pike, a pair of family chronicles from Old Blighty in the staid Edwardian tradition of Galswater and Drinkworthy—yet with a bit of a difference; so that, as with Prokofieff's "Classical Symphony," you can't tell whether the composer is for it or against it, ahead of it or behind it.

Angus Wilson makes less of a difference. *No Laughing Matter* comes too close for comfort to an updated, augmented version of *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*; in its kaleidoscopic panoramascope it "covers" better than half a century, from "before the war" to 1967; its protagonists are the six children of a raffish, squalid, vaguely Bohemian ménage, whom we follow by turns through their various professional, matrimonial, political, military, and legal vicissitudes, from just this side of the cradle to just this side of the grave. They are a rackety, eventful crew, with a nice, resilient talent for postponing the apocalypse; and it's evident that Mr. Wilson relishes the gamier of them after the old-fashioned picaresque way of a novelist with a rascal. Gladys, for example, who went to jail for four years because of her aging, irresponsible sugar-daddy, learns at last what a complete liar he was, but learns also rather to admire him for it; and Marcus, who began life as a hustling young pansy, turns out a wise, prosperous, and perceptive old pansy with a lovely establishment in Tangier. And there we are, almost; not a Victorian ending precisely, but only because the virtues rewarded are a little subtler, a little more inverse, than the conventional ones.

Yet there's something going on all the way through the novel that isn't directly serious and isn't quite a spoof either. As children the Matthews flock have a family game going that they fall into all their lives long, whenever two or three of them are gathered together; it's

¹ NO LAUGHING MATTER, by *Angus Wilson*. Viking. \$6.95. THE NICE AND THE GOOD, by *Iris Murdoch*. Viking. \$5.75. THE FLOOD, by *J. M. G. LeClézio*. Atheneum. \$5.95. THE EDGE, by *Page Stegner*. Dial. \$4.95. SHEEPER, by *Irving Rosenthal*. Grove. \$5.95. COUNTRY JUDGE, by *Pedro Prado*. Tr. by *Lesley Byrd Simpson*. U. of California. \$4.95. MILKBOTTLE H, by *Gil Orlovitz*. Delacorte. \$7.50. RED DIRT MARIJUANA, by *Terry Southern*. New American Library. \$5.50. THE BUDDHA TREE, by *Fumio Niwa*. Tr. by *Kenneth Strong*. Peter Owen Ltd. 42s. IN THE HEART OF THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY, by *William H. Gass*. Harper & Row. \$4.95

a parody, a burlesque, a loving nightmare into which, by a kind of established complicity, everybody fits. Its chief components are the selfish, hysterical Countess (Mother), and the genial, incompetent Billy-Pop (Father). Like their parents, all the children are obsessed wordsmiths, word-twisters, pasters-over of life with word-stickums. And the novel itself breaks down from time to time into a series of mock-dramas or collective mimes—swirling, spiralling out of surface realism toward a statement about spiritual dynamics to which fictional rewards and punishments are completely irrelevant. On the episodic level, the novel is not far from leading to a discouraged shrug of the shoulders, a commonplace sense of “Well, hasn’t it all been odd?” or “Who would have thought it?” But on another level, it’s a rather terrifying picture of the power of words and fantasies to control and ultimately to destroy people. Almost all the main characters in the book are unscrupulous and instinctively resourceful liars; and their lies go on at such length, with such impetus and volubility, and such elaborate allusiveness, that one is fairly smothered by them—an effect one likes to think Mr. Angus Wilson intended.

Yet in playing with edged tools, a hand which is not absolutely sure is apt to slip a little—one positive sign being a certain protective flinch or cover-up gesture. Mr. Wilson blurs too often the line between the tricks he loves to see through and those he loves to use for his own advantage. His stylistic pyrotechnics are sometimes bent to ends not much loftier than nostalgia, snobbery, or self-pity; and these effects ring particularly false in a novel devoted so largely to inauthentic language. A soft and self-indulgent family-chronicle is, after all, intolerable in this day and age; and when Mr. Wilson’s acuteness slips into the merely catty, and his beautifully phrased nightmares start affecting us as verbal light-shows, the novel has clearly lost its edge. That edge is simply the thin blade of controlling irony, an unmanipulated and dispassionate channel of vision which can suggest, beyond a charade, some sort of doom-judgment on the soul. Instead of anything like this, Mr. Wilson has settled for a costume-piece, complacency in drag.

Against Miss Iris Murdoch no one will ever bring the charge of unwarranted softness. *The Nice and the Good* is, in setting and apparently in theme, a spacious family novel like Angus Wilson’s, a web of interlaced narrative threads and extradomestic intertwinings, the whole woven around the investigation of a suicide in a Whitehall office. With more marked malice than Mr. Wilson, Miss Murdoch has exercised her full repertoire of happenstances and reversals to make Everything Come Out All Right In The End—but it is, unmistakably, a very sardonic kind of Rightness. The chief agent of official virtue is himself involved in two excessively shabby private intrigues; the “happy ending” of another intrigue is predicated on an act of high-minded blackmail by the said agent of virtue; and in general the re-establishment of a social norm seals into whited sepulchres a whole

bundle of rotten-mean injustices. The book runs over with a kind of restless, inconclusive promiscuity, some grotesque violence that won't ever quite settle down, the grating-together of raw nerve-ends. And yet the setting is idyllic and traditional—the spacious country house rendered livable by wads of bland money and civilized manners, the casual, cultivated society of family, old friends, grumpy-but-amusing servants, children, and entangled pets. Standing outside all this expansive niceness and rather more limited goodness, Miss Murdoch manages to see, and hold her bead on, an element of savagery that is disconcertingly genuine.

Her finest touch, worth noting in detail because it is a powerfully operative detail, grows out of a moment of ill-controlled rage and jealousy. A husband, altogether promiscuous himself, thinks he is indifferent to his wife's consequent infidelity. But he encounters her lover at a socially awkward moment, grows enraged with him because he looks bigger physically than he has any right to be, and, without really intending to do more than hurt or humiliate him, manages, not to kill or disfigure, but simply to *maim* him in a horrible, ordinary, permanent fashion. Everyone involved feels ghastly uncomfortable about this incident/accident; in some way that nobody can explain, it is shameful and ugly. And to show the thing this way is to cast a kind of light on our acculturation, and our expectations as readers of family-chronicles about people who are very nice and sort of good. A close ancestor of this breed of novel (which one can find François Truffaut invoking as the thematic root of *Jules et Jim*) is Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. It's a hundred and sixty years since this particular fiction was *nouvelle vague*, but it provided by all odds the most memorable reading in your chronicler's last quarter, and I commend it with special energy to those who've never been able to get over the feeling that Goethe is a stuffed shirt—well stuffed, with the best of stuffing, but always stuffy. Not here. Not here at all.

Well, to our knitting: a pair of novels about noble savages by young men who know how to write. J. M. G. LeClézio, Anglo-French by background, publishes with Gallimard, is translated for Hamish Hamilton (with tyres, odours, pyjamas, mopeds, perms, and other special effects from the U.K.), and vended on these shores by Atheneum; *The Flood* is the third of his five books, the second of his three novels. Nobody looking into it is likely to be unaware that it has been strongly marked by the icy finger of phenomenology, a world-view which involves stripping things as clear as possible of their human and mythological meanings, in order to reveal their exact thinginess. As a consequence, M. LeClézio's book is full of words, words, words. Fortunately they are generally fine ones. The novel opens, in a passage of extended bravura writing, upon a world stripped to the rudiments, a world of cracked masonry, shattered glass, rags of old newsprint blowing through empty streets. The flood, or a vision or version of the flood (perhaps

an atomic flood, perhaps a metaphysical flood), has clearly taken place, either in the survivor's mind as a prelude to the action of the novel proper, or in the cosmos outside as a consequence. But a survivor there is, and there are a few other people with whom he reacts, mostly negatively, and in the end we have something like a fable. Not that this reader was distressed to find a novel turning into something other than an extended description. The nice thing about feelings is that they're a shorthand for words.

The Noah of this flood is a semi-derelict French dropout in a nameless town; the stench of humanity, his own as well as other people's, is in his nostrils, and over a period of twelve carefully chronicled days he turns off most of the approaches to the human race, and at last deliberately blinds himself by staring straight into the sun. What precisely troubles sulky François Besson isn't easily given a clinical name; he himself, of course, is classically inarticulate and non-analytic. Of some symbolic import, though we're never given much basis for guessing what, is the gurgling flood of water rising through the town's drainage system, intermittently audible, always ominous. Maybe too our doomed hero has had from the start an impulse toward the direct, the too-direct vision; his staring out his eyes in a direct assault on the sun is perhaps his own judgment on his own grisly talent, his last-ditch way of stemming the flood of things. But we'd better not try to psych out the novel's motivation; best to take it simply as a set of apocalyptic surfaces and images doing the dance of desolation. And if he wasn't a first-rate stylist, it's permitted to think that M. LeClézio's novel would be merely a modish piece of mannered ghastliness. But his world of objects lives and writhes and has its being; he can do a streetful of people under a rainstorm, in a manner worthy of Flaubert—all legs, bosoms, rumps, noses, eyes, hips, grunts, sweats, dribbles, drips, and groans. Like an actor with a genuine supply of business, he continually varies perspective, tone, pace, stance, volume, focus—as a result of which, it's an immensely busy book with only an echo of emptiness, and leaves one with the sense of a resourceful talent, well worth watching for the future.

Page Stegner has another one of these mute, sincere, crapped-up types for a hero in *The Edge*; he suffers over the general lack of authenticity up and down the West Coast—a routine saintly bum, who drops out, turns on, shacks up, and then cops out, rather predictably if one knows the governing conventions. The title edge is the edge of the continent as well as the ragged edge of the hero's self-control; its desperately over-natural way of life, as well as its outsize scenery, are caught in a hundred perceptive and finely rendered details. The hero's sentimental hangups struck this reader as sulky-infantile, and he found it a real trial to follow sympathetically such calculated pursuit of a guilt-rationale leading to such extended and carefully stage-managed martyrdoms. But Mr. Stegner can render memorably a misty morning

with salmon boats on the bay, a derelict hotel on the shore, and hills shouldering out of the mist; and he knows his way around a certain sort of choked nightmare. His book is a pleasure to read for the impressions. It's a far softer book than *The Flood*, and practice will teach Mr. Stegner that young men in the throes of sex-disgust really shouldn't be allowed to invoke John Donne—it's just too artsy; but the verbal bounce and imaginative detail of a writer are here. Whatever its other problems, the book isn't very often inert; and that's a major point gained.

An anti-novel which goes both these un-novels one better, which has an even slobbier sub-hero and less of a narrative, can cheerfully be commended as one of the best and one of the worst books of the quarter. *Sheeper*, by Irving Rosenthal, does plenty to put the reader off; on the other hand, it's a virtuoso performance of sorts. Its ovine spokesman is not only multitudinously and repetitively and specifically queer; he is vociferous about sexualizing everything, including his own writing. (The sensitive reader may well cry, *What the hell!* when advised that by reading the book he has got himself involved in some obscene form of copulation with Mister Sheeper.) He leans heavily on the dope thing, and takes us on a full round of hallucinated retchings and twitchings; he makes a lot of in-group business with some more or less recognizable writers with whom he has been associated, Allen, you know, and Bill Burroughs, and some others less eminent. In all these, and some other ways, his book seems as phony as a \$69-bill; and its refusal of all consecutivity could be nothing but a form of indulgence. But in fact it has an obsessed and hallucinatory sort of structure which enables it to generate here and there a frightful kind of intensity. If fiction is to consist of plunges into the uncivilized private fantasy, there seems no reason why we shouldn't see the full loathsomeness of which it is capable; and the omnipresent bugs, filth, perversion, and gooey sentiment of *Sheeper's* scenario suggest we're getting just that. There are even passages where sharp images, lucid rhythms, and touches of self-mocking humor give one a sense of artistic control and clarity, particularly moving in the face of the book's basic materials. So it's for strong and patient readers, who are likely to find it about as enjoyable as a ripped fingernail; but power it's got.

The point of all Mr. Rosenthal's baroque exercise in stylistics is presumably some sort of authenticity in and through buffoonery; and this effect he in fact, in part, achieves. But one can get a useful sense of how little mannerisms of style and "modernity" of structure count for on the authenticity scale, by reading *Sheeper* in counterpoint with a Chilean import, *Country Judge* by Pedro Prado. Señor Prado works in a genre no more up-to-date than the moral parable, telling a simple story about a nice man in Santiago, his good friend, his family and his neighbors; they all get involved in his gratuitous effort to do something like justice. Unsophisticated as all this sounds, Señor Prado manages

the quiet naïvetés of his story with a kind of wise openness which has been in the Spanish tradition at least since *Don Quixote*. His impractical fool, like Cervantes', is capable of suggesting a sacred dimension to foolishness; and the fact that it is possible for people to like one another in his world does not preclude overtones of metaphysical anxiety. Quiet and unpretentious, the narrative of *Country Judge* is obviously far out of the mode for discordant, nonconsecutive, stylized surfaces. But it has its strengths; the hero's final self-confrontation in the darkened mirror of his empty, rat-infested house carries real weight. If only because it seems less *voulu*, less garish than the current run of U.S.A. fiction, Señor Prado's softly voiced disquiet may in the end spread wider ripples through our minds—provided we can be still long enough to listen.

More briefly, *Milkbottle H* by Gil Orlovitz is an effort at a Philadelphia *Ulysses*; it is a largely conceived and thickly written novel, which doesn't ever release its characters from the torrent of wordage which sweeps around them. The novel needs light, air, perspective, and something more various in the way of style. Terry Southern's *Red Dirt Marijuana* looked promising, but turned out to be a mishmash of short stories and incidental pieces, some of them cleverly conceived but written with a thick pen and a tin ear which made even the straight passages sound as if they were satirizing a mysteriously pompous original. "Razor Fight" is an exception which shows what the volume might have been.

An exotic import from the mysterious East is *The Buddha Tree* by Fumio Niwa, which is probably a better novel for English than for Japanese readers. Dealing as it does with the problems of a Buddhist priest in a rapidly industrializing society, its resort to human stereotypes doesn't prevent its social theme from catching our interest. The priest Soshu is almost comically weak and helpless; the evil capitalist is, sure enough, coarse, obese, bestial. Assorted ladies complicate matters. But the picture of the priest's life, with his ties to the temple and the village, with his wife, his congregation, and his congregation's interest in his wife, and especially the portraits of such types as the Communist leader who still knows and loves the ancient ritual—this will be rich and interesting material for the Western reader. Not the purest of reasons for picking up a novel, admittedly, but these days one finds rationales where one can. There is a good deal of helpless moping in Mr. Niwa's novel, and some melodrama, but also a social interest such as novels used to provide and don't very often any more.

At this point your fiction chronicler, with nearly thirty volumes scattered in his wake, was on the point of raising the despairing question, Who can possibly read fiction any more? when a good reason for doing so turned up. In *The Heart of the Heart of the Country* is a collection of three short stories and two novellas, by William H. Gass,

who teaches philosophy at Purdue. I haven't read Mr. Gass's previous novel, *Omensetter's Luck*, but the stories in *Heart* are ample inducement to do so. They are intensely midwestern stories, about lonely people in ugly settings. Mr. Gass is a virtuoso of the short, hard sentence and the gaunt detail; one is almost reconciled to bald, agricultural realism before he recognizes a rich vein of fantasy, indeed of poetry, running through the stories. Certainly it's the simplicity of the materials and the richness of the imaginative art controlling them that most impresses one in the first and longest piece, "The Pedersen Kid." "Icicles," in a more bubbling and open vein of fantasy, plays with the grotesque pathos of an infested real-estate salesman; while "Mrs. Mean" only slowly reveals itself as a study in obsession. If there's a single word for saying what pleases one most about these stories, it's *poise*. They deal with violent feelings and blind conflicts but without baggy language or excess gestures. They are modern, in the sense that one can't imagine them being written without a pretty good perspective on the work of Faulkner; yet they never become "modernistic." The techniques, which are various and imaginative, are always in the service of vision and feeling. Mr. Gass's stories are strict and beautiful pieces of writing without waste or falsity or indulgence. And so long as fiction like this can blossom at the unexpected moment, I don't suppose we need to worry, for the time being, about the state of the art.

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

Kennan's *Memoirs*

I MUST EXPLAIN AT THE OUTSET that I came to this book wanting to admire it, since I have felt myself obliged to the author for a good twenty years.¹ Some time in the winter of 1947-48, I heard of and read a famous, anonymous article in *Foreign Affairs*, a magazine I had never read in before and have never read in since, entitled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." That essay did more than everything else combined to clarify and change my muddily liberal, sporadically fellow-traveling views on Russia and Communism. To my debt of gratitude to the author for this service, another, no less extensive, must be added. I have always been disposed to believe in government—except for a few agreeable trips on a Dwight Macdonaldish cloud-9—and I have usually wanted and even tried to believe in the government of my country, both its form and its practice, though seldom with great success. 1947-48 was a bad year for me, and to think that the author of that essay (whose name was revealed to be George F. Kennan) could be a fairly high official in the U. S. State Department gave, and continued to give, me strength. From the article and from some others that followed it, I knew beyond argument that he was of high intelligence. He had devoted his professional life to government. Government had tolerated him, and even for a little while, in the person of George Marshall, really listened to him. It is true that he retired from service in 1950 (though he retired in order to meditate on the conduct of our foreign policy and to write about it in the hope of influencing it), and I doubt that any now in power would heed his advice. All the same, the time may come again when a wise man will think it worth his while to do what is necessary to gain entrance to the counsels of American power, and I preserve, I secretly nourish, the hope that, if one should do this, he might be listened to. Truman appointed Marshall, and JFK seems to me to have been as president comparable to Truman, capable of appointing a Secretary of State capable of listening to a Kennan, even to this same Kennan; and I hope things have not deteriorated so much as to forbid the election of another president of their caliber, not great, just passable. I came to this book, then, with unreasonably exalted expectations—after all, it is in one way of speaking an account of the career and intellectual development of a bureaucrat of the second rank—but, in the course of far more important accomplishments, it fulfilled those expectations of mine abundantly. I mention a matter so personal because I imagine that my case is not unique. In the thirty years I have been noticing such things, Kennan is the only government servant of importance about whom I have heard people who respect high intelligence in-

¹ MEMOIRS 1925-1950, by George F. Kennan. Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$10.00.

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variably speak with a certain quiet brevity: "Oh, yes, of course. Does he?" I suppose, American democracy being what it is, we should be grateful to have had even one such man in the counsels of power for even a few of our years. Maybe there is one such in government now; I do not know who he is. One is badly needed, if only for the morale of intellectuals, who, confronted with the moral sloth of the strong, the political stupidity of the weak, and the impotence of the wise, are chronically tempted to despair of America. A generation ago many defected to some form of totalitarianism or anarchism; currently to cynicism, solipsism, or nihilism. May George Kennan have years of intellectual vigor before him still, and may he accomplish what he retired from service to accomplish, persuading the nation to allow and even to encourage the introduction of professionalism and thought into the making of our foreign policy. For by the slobbery of that policy, now and for most of the years since World War II and for as far ahead as I can see, we stand condemned.

This is not the occasion, though the book would permit a reviewer so to proceed, to summarize Kennan's opinions on our foreign policy during the twenty-five years these memoirs encompass, nor do I have the knowledge needed to comment on those opinions in detail. But the qualities of the person behind these opinions are the proper concern of one talking about an autobiography, and they are made clear in this book both by the author's analytic statements and by the writing itself. First, I shall speak a little of his character as diplomat and political thinker, and then of this book as literature.

He has the ancient civic virtues—probity, prudence, resolution to speak out, stern sense of responsibility, loyalty—no one of which is rare, I believe, among government servants, nor is the combination of them in a single person unheard of. What is practically unique is their coexistence with a mind devoted with passionate intensity to the making of exact discriminations in as delicate and obscure a moral universe as one can find, American diplomacy. But this is not all, or even the most, of it. What are his principles, those final principles which a man operates on and which are beyond the power of intelligence to change? A lot of them will come, of course, from his heritage. Kennan descended from midwestern, Protestant, free farmer, British stock, with a strong eighteenth-century disposition towards independence of thought and regard for right reason. He believes that the civilization of Christian Europe is a high good thing worth fighting for but in danger not only from enemies without, but of destroying itself utterly. He accepts it as a given that the men who run great nations, and the great nations they run, enjoy imposing their wills on others, like to kill their enemies; that love of power is modified by all sorts of historical, religious, and ideological forces and is peculiar to no one group or time; and that power is the medium with which diplomats work. Empire being likely in the nature of things (he believes that there is a nature even to human things), he looks to

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Rome as the model for decent empire. He thinks it possible for America, her leaders, and himself to be wrong, even wicked, and also to be right, even virtuous. In the *now* of decision, he retains a strong awareness of history both ways. He can imagine his enemies suffering tragically and thinks it good to be humble before such suffering. He is not disposed to blame a people for its despots. But the quality that stands out above all others for me, the one which that X-article twenty years ago embodied and which these memoirs elaborate, is his steadfast vision of history, politics, foreign affairs, war, as being a matter of men and nations, not of devils or ideologies. He knew Russia and Germany well, their languages, literatures, histories, and people; he was and remains warmly engaged by things Russian and rather coolly admiring towards things German. But, since he is not and never has been a man for causes, he was never blinded by either the Marxist or Nazi ideologies into forgetting that the rulers of those great parties and nations were, first and last, men of power and men of certain national dispositions, not incarnations of ideas. Not even the Nazis became devils or raving lunatics for him; they remained only a wide range of men, many of them dreadful criminals, a few no doubt mad. Stalin never became Uncle Joe for him in the sentimental way of FDR liberalism, nor the agent of historical necessity, nor a paranoid fiend; he remained a Georgian in Russia, employing traditional Russian political strategies and limited by them, enormously astute in his judgment of persons, coldly cynical in all his power dealings (and also a believer in the Bolshevik cause). Kennan expected those two national faiths to die down or out, as they did, and he also knew that what the Russians and Germans did was strongly modified by what our side did, so that we were necessarily involved in and partially responsible for their behavior in foreign affairs: not only did we to some extent let them do what they did, we also to an appreciable degree made them do it. The moment such things are stated, you know them to be true. Yet he was the only one saying them for a long time; and now that it's the turn of the Chinese Communists, and maybe the North Vietnamese too, to be our devilish ideologues, apparently they need to be said all over again, only louder. If we go down soon, neither devils nor Communism will bring us down, but men, certainly faulty and probably wrong and sometimes admirable men with histories—they and our inability to see them as they are beneath their masks and isms, and our complementary inability to see ourselves as men with histories too, faulty, wrong maybe, in some ways admirable, above all implicated to the depths of our souls.

Why has Kennan written his memoirs? He was never one of the great; his adventures were few and unspectacular; his ego is very sizable but not diseased, and his conception of it, for the purposes of this book at any rate, is steady. Nor is he following the fashion of confessing his inner secrets. Gibbon's *Autobiographies*, not Rousseau's *Confessions*, suggest Kennan's attitude towards himself, as also some-



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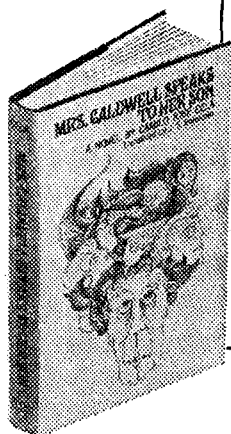
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Chapter 4: An Old-Time Tango

When I dance that sinister tango with you,
the one that begins: "Come into my arms
again, let's forget what happened," I feel like
a young girl. We are nobody, my dear; no-
body, absolutely nobody, darling Eliacim!
With my silvered hair. . . . What a horror! My
bitter mouth. . . . What a horror! With a dead
look. . . . What a horror!

Dance that tango with me, dear; press me
close against you, and hum those repulsive
words that give me back my youth and fill
my heart with evil intentions. Obey your
mother, my son, so that no one may say that
you're disobedient.

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thing of his prose style. He does not reinvent former selves in this narrative; he does not pretend to remember much from his childhood, nor from his adult life much for which he lacks a written record (he has been a copious diarist); he never goes close to his unconscious, and what he tells about his private life is on the order of an expanded entry in *Who's Who*. His distancing prose style is out of fashion now; indeed, he may well have found a gloomy satisfaction in writing so thoroughly against the grain of the age. Sometimes, he recedes a bit too far; there are quite a few small but hardly necessary awkwardnesses forced upon the prose by his stubborn reluctance to use the first person singular pronoun for other than the conscious, public self that was meant to and does inform the book. "For the journey from London to Illinois, memory is a blank. There is a faint impression of the new child, Joan Elizabeth, lying in her crib, placid and dignified, betraying as yet nothing of what growth and maturity were to make of her." (She is not mentioned again.) Partly, I think, he has chosen to write this large book about his career simply because the subject interests him and challenges his literary powers more than any other he has turned to. But the main reason, clearly, is to instruct: this lucid, elegant, scrupulous, even finicky account of his career is an excellent way to understand exactly how our foreign policy is shaped and why it ought to be shaped differently. His ambition is to alter the conduct of American foreign policy by influencing the climate of opinion and thereby those who will formulate that policy, and this book is essential to that campaign. It is also self-justifying to a degree that would ordinarily be dangerous. Possibly there were aspects to his own intransigent personality which turned the powerful away from him; short of this possibility, for which I find little evidence in the book, then his thesis forces him to be self-justifying in the public interest. He *did* give good advice, it *was* seldom followed, the State Department *ought* to be so set up that good intellectual analysis and advice by professional diplomats who are relatively free from domestic political pressures is sought and heeded, not filed away unread.

But also, and he knows it, the book is a work of literature, and in this respect my admiration, while enormous, is not quite total. A classical style as elaborate, ironic, and complacent as this demands a Gibbonesque perfection, winces from every touch of the obvious or cliché, and always stops in time. This sentence seems to me superbly poised up to the semicolon, but heavy after it. "More than a decade of experience in writing reports for the Department of State had now begun to teach me the art of writing without an audience, or at least without a reacting one; and I was learning to enjoy it." The prose is marred by more unpruned clauses like this *and*-clause than it should or need be, and also by occasional expressions which, if not clichés, are unpleasingly stale: "Europe as we know it," "the fact of the matter is that there is a little bit of the totalitarian buried somewhere, way

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down deep, in each and every one of us." There is another respect in which the book suffers literarily, but through no fault of Kennan's: documents. Kennan is not unlike Thucydides in being a minor participant in great actions, but he is hampered by all those documents, which he, being scrupulous, must quote as written. No contemporaneous history can ever again be literarily as satisfying as *The Peloponnesian Wars*, if for no other reason than that no historian will ever again be free to compose the envoys' speeches for them. Lincoln could write a funerary oration worthy of the one Thucydides composed after Pericles, but no president since Lincoln could have done so, certainly not Truman; and neither could any of Truman's ambassadors compose speeches comparable to those Thucydides composed impartially for Thebans, Spartans, Athenians, whomever. It seems possible that the art of history may not survive the tape recorder at all. Kennan, the historian of himself, quotes from many sources, most extensively from his own diaries, and, while they are much better written than most, their prose is usually inferior to the prose of the *Memoirs* proper. (Those two stale sentences I quoted came from the diaries.) So, this is not a great book, but in the sustained tension of its detached involvement, it is a noble one (Kennan is a high instance of that alienated commitment so frequent among American intellectuals, including the most indigenous). Moreover, in a few passages, it opens to a passionate yet not unbalanced eloquence perfectly suited to his ultimately pessimistic vision, reminiscent of Tacitus, held from the apathy of despair by the author's sustained resolution to phrase it rationally, elegantly, with fine discrimination. After a devastating portrayal of Latin American political leaders, convincing but profoundly shocking, he goes on to say:

Latin America is the only one of the world's great subdivisions where the human being is still entirely human, where no one has nuclear weapons or is even thinking of developing them, where the great fund of precept and experience and custom that has been created in the Christian West to reconcile man with God and with the requirements of a civilized condition is still wholly relevant. The South American continent may prove some day to be the last repository and custodian of humane Christian values that men in the European motherlands and in North America—overfed, over-organized, and blinded by fear and ambition—have thrown away.

(This Latin American report was quickly filed away in secret drawers, but not because it was unread. On the contrary.)

There is a hopeful suggestion towards the end of the book that he may write a second volume of memoirs. It would be both interesting and instructive to know what happened during his year as ambassador to Russia and his two years as ambassador to Yugoslavia. Besides, the world shows no signs yet of suffering from a surfeit of noble prose.

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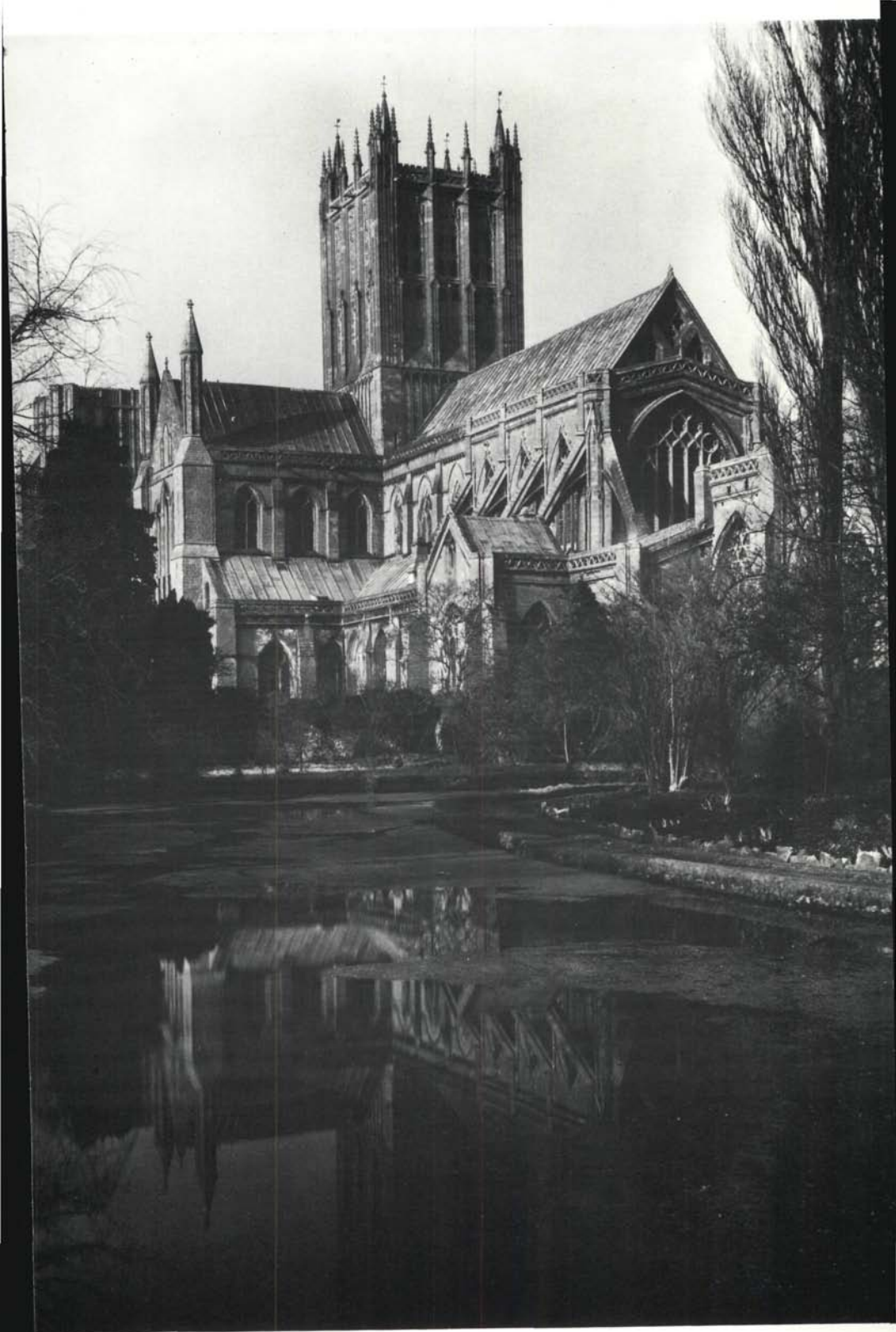
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*... yet there is no man bound to
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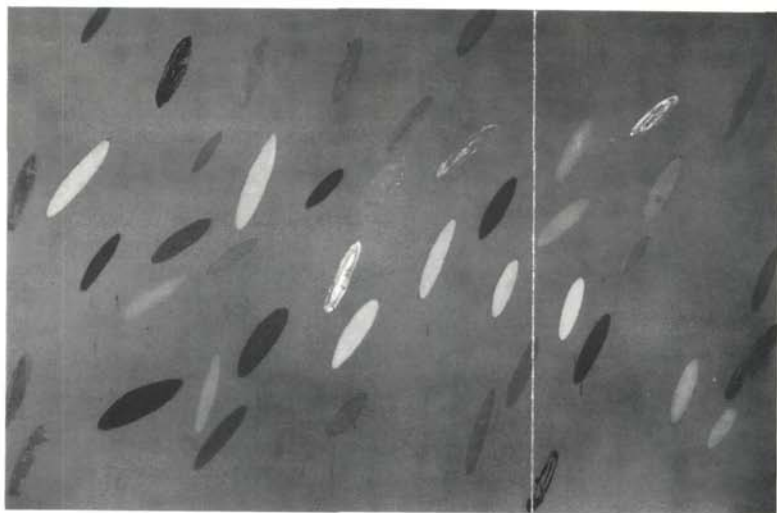
FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD
... just enough rule to regulate instinct and yet not to fetter it

THE WAR GAME

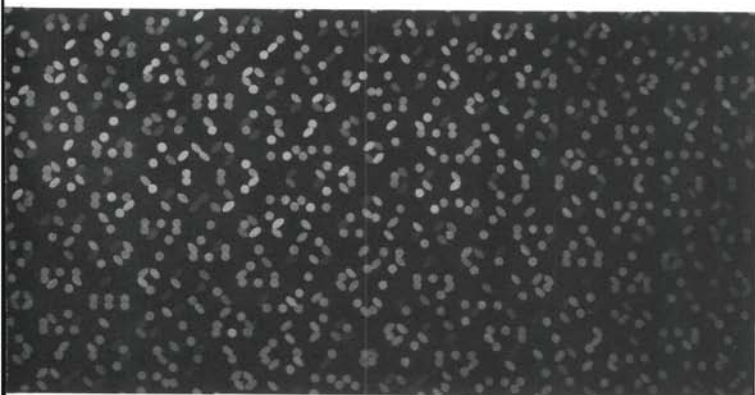
After the first death, there is no



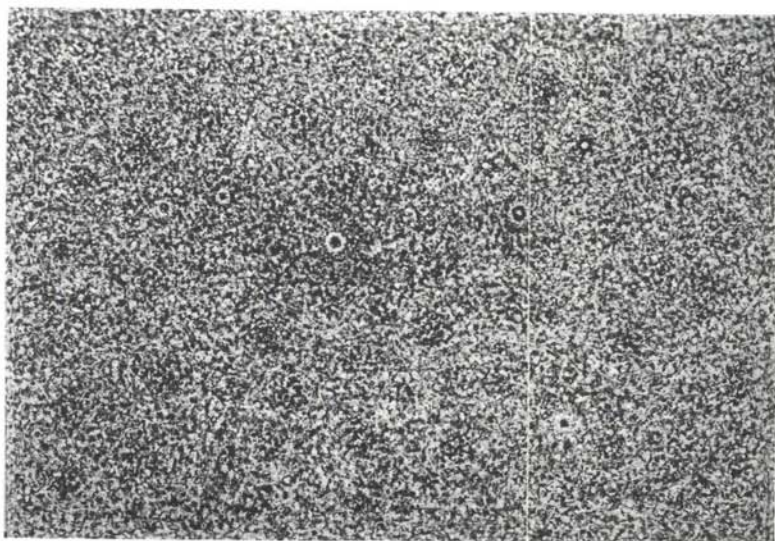
Larry Poons
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 1967
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 (courtesy of Milwaukee
 Art Center)

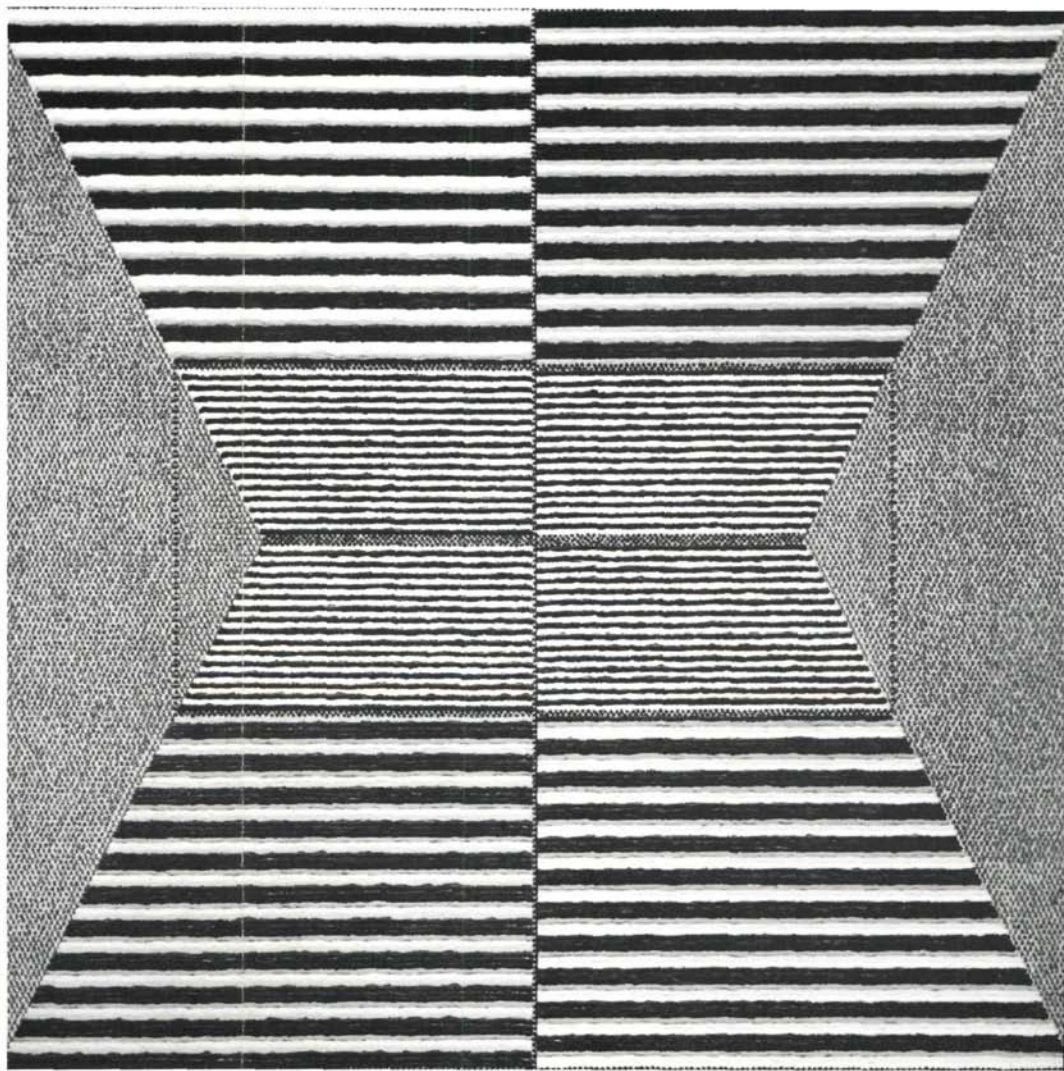


Larry Poons
 VIA REGIA
 1964-65
 Acrylic on canvas
 6' × 12'
 Collection: Joseph H. Hirshhorn
 (courtesy of Leo Castelli Gallery)*



hard Pousette-Dart
 VERNOUS EARTH WITH
 FOLDS OF OPAQUENESS
 1-64
 on canvas
 × 115½"





Alfred Jensen
THE ACROATIC RECTANGLE
 1967
 Oil on Canvas
 97' X 97¼'
 (courtesy of Cordier and Ekstrom)

* Not in the Whitney Annual

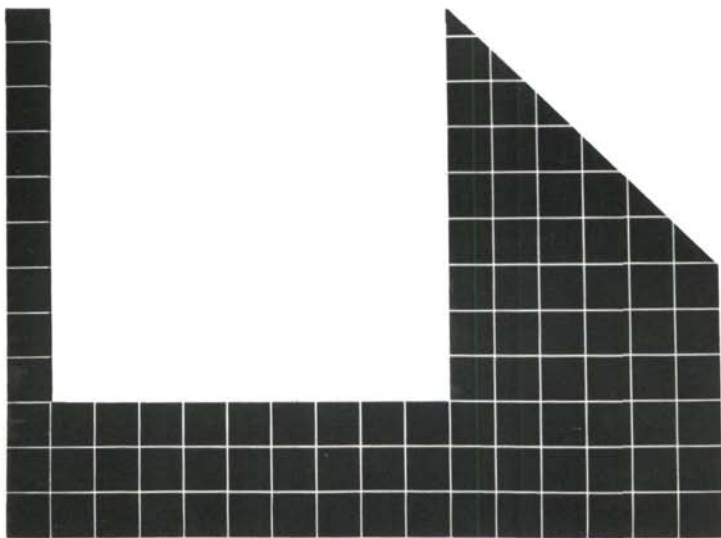
Photo credits: Stella (Hagmatan) and Pooms (WZ Regia)—Rudolph Burckhardt; Will Insley—George Roos; Larry Pooms (Untitled) and Alfred Jensen (Geoffrey Clements).



Kenneth Noland	1967	Acrylic on canvas	7' 4 ³ / ₄ " × 19' 1"	Collection: Robert Rowan,	Pasadena
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Frank Stella
CHARLOTTE TOKAYER
 1963
 Oil on Canvas
 87" × 91½"
 (courtesy of Leo Castelli Galle



Will Insley
WALL FRAGMENT
 1967
 Liquitex on masonite
 8' × 10'8"
 (courtesy of Stable Galle



Frank Stella
HAGMATANA III
 1967
 Fluorescent acrylic on canvas
 120" × 240"
 Collection: David Whitney
 (courtesy of Leo Castelli Gallery)*